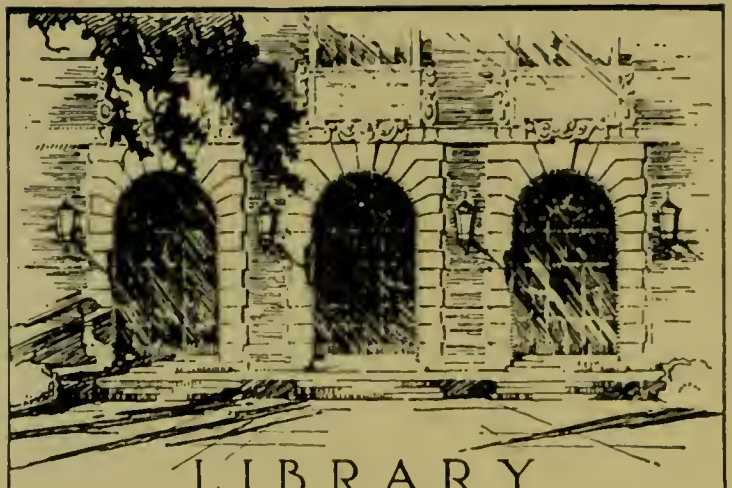

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WHITEPATCH.

WHITEPATCH.

A ROMANCE FOR QUIET PEOPLE.

"Il faudrait avoir le courage de ne se préoccuper ni des succès du salon ni de l'opinion de la presse, ni de l'éventualité des récompenses, et ne s'inquiéter que de se contenter soi-même."—ALFRED STEPHENS, *Impressions sur la Peinture.*

"Wholesomeness is the salt of life."—*Spanish Proverb.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,

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1887.

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TO

MRS. LYNN LINTON.

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WHITEPATCH.

CHAPTER I.

THE FRAME OF THE PICTURE.

In that extremely healthy and pleasant corner which lies to the south-east and in the morning sun of old England called East Kent, there remain to this day evidences of the active smuggling which was formerly carried on there with the neighbouring coast of France, not only of wine, spirits, tea and tobacco and articles of dress, but also of priests, bishops, and even cardinals and other human contrabands in the time of the great civil and religious

disturbances. Some of its charming old black and white houses, and even its churches, still contain their ingenious hiding-places, both for the race of Adam and for kegs of brandy. Could human nature resist the facilities of a short run from the opposite coast, when tea was twenty shillings a pound, and other things in proportion? One side was thirsting for English gold, the other for luxuries and fineries that were practically prohibited; and, like a pair of ardent lovers, they evaded law, locks, tempests, and steel, to rush into each other's arms. Could such a convenient and out-of-the-way corner, with its intricate ill-made roads, without sign-posts, reliable maps, or willing guides, and near an almost deserted shore, with safety in sight across the water, fail to be discovered by the ingenious Italians, agents of Rome,

and the hunted political and religious refugees who swarmed in this country at well-known periods of agitation, when human conscience and life were at stake?

In the smuggling of goods, not only did the squires and farmers and the country people enter heartily into the business, but even the parsons and their churchwardens—as is to be verified by places which the natives call "hides," until recently to be seen, before the restoration movement, in the roofs of some of the churches and the cellars and dairies of old parsonage houses. The numerous natural caves in the chalk land, called by the inhabitants "chalk holes," were also turned to good account, and their entrance was concealed by barns or other outbuildings, or skilfully masked by thick underwood. As far as the writer is aware, these irregular proceedings of the

old inhabitants of this interesting part of England have never yet been brought much into fiction; but in this later part of the nineteenth century, what angel from heaven has any longer a divine right to privacy and exclusion, or to set up a brick wall against impertinence and profitable curiosity? He has been ruled out of court, and the writer in the performance of his duty to society can only honestly endeavour to trample down his neighbours' fences with as gentle a laugh and as kindly a face as the imperative circumstances will allow. Neither, perhaps, has the charm of their old houses, with their ghosts, hiding-places, and old gardens, their hundred doors, their endless strange staircases and passages, caught the eye of the painter or the writer with the full attention they deserve.

Although this story is placed near the present time, it must of necessity be cast somewhat on the romantic lines of an elder school of fiction, to be in harmony with the surroundings and their associations; hence it will probably be found a jumble of old and new styles,—somewhat as the milliners revive an old fashion with skilful modifications, and pass it off on the public as a new one. In the present case it is better for the author honestly to confess his trick of combination, and pray devoutly for a little of the skill of those accomplished ladies! Some of the leading incidents and descriptions are founded on a fair modicum of fact; the one in particular of an old library and its secret hiding-places will be painted from actual still life with some care, though with the artist's privilege of treatment which the nature of the composition demands.

It is the author's duty, while his reader is fresh, to take him through some rather tiresome description. It is, however, necessary that he should have a clear general knowledge of the remarkable old house in which the scene is laid, and in some cases even to the point of minute particularity; otherwise he will find it difficult to understand the exact places haunted by the ghosts, the various strange hiding-places—one of which only will at present be described—the somewhat eccentric habits of the family, and the plot of the story, in which the old house plays a very important part, being in truth almost one of the *dramatis personæ*.

CHAPTER II.

A DOZEN SETS OF STAIRS AND A HUNDRED DOORS.

WHITEPATCH (called in its native county Whi'puth) is the name of a very ancient manor in East Kent. It derives this from the first house—probably a farm building or stead called indiscriminately in old deeds Witepatche and Doddingestede — being built on a patch of bare chalk land, little spots of which still show in the neighbourhood of the house like the soiled remnants of departing snow. The present house, although a grandchild only of the first, is by no means modern, as the greater part of

the existing structure was built, as far as it is possible to make out through the mist of contending authorities, in the early part of the reign of James the First. It has not only one, but several ghosts, although their histories all belong to the last house; one is charming, another is terrible, and the third is sad and perplexing. It has several secret hiding-places — some with double exits—and the strange rambling old house is a veritable place of enchantment for those who love that kind of thing, and have the power of constructive imagination to enter into its past, and a good conscience that fears not the visitants of another world. Its outside almost defies description, so irregular is its plan, and so numerous are its gables and projections. It would seem as if it had been built expressly to baffle an inquisitorial eye, as to the space

and disposition of its interior. It is chiefly black and white, with a roof covered with red tiles, evidently from different makers, many of them almost black from age; and it has a quaint old porch at the entrance, with an inner and outer door, stone seats within, and a little window on one side.

The house is surrounded with many charming little gardens, inclosed with brick walls of different heights and construction, some with raised terraces and broad walks, bordered round with ancient rose and other trees, so homely and pleasant, the visitor lingers with regret at having to leave them. Most of them have been formed during the time of the present house, except one, which has thick stone walls with lines of brickwork, and is supposed to have belonged to the second house built in the

time of Edward the Third. There are snug arbours in snug corners, doors with porticoes of fanciful brickwork of much simple beauty and ingenuity. Some gardens are square, one is long (the Long Garden), another is irregular, with odd corners and walls higher than any of the others, called the Magnolia Garden, though there is no magnolia in it, another garden apparently having been found better for them, as several fine ones now flourish in one of the square gardens. So individual are they all, that one is impressed with the idea that succeeding generations felt it their duty to make a garden as a protest against the taste of their predecessors; and yet they have a strong family likeness—delightful in the summer with their fine old flowers, terraces, arbours, and buzzing insects, and warm and sheltered in winter. The Long

Garden has an interesting peculiarity. In one of the walls is inserted a long line of tombstones recording the life, death, and virtues of a famous family of terriers now extinct. It is remarkable to observe how many of them met with a violent death. Another garden, much larger than the rest, joins itself to this little colony; this is the kitchen garden, surrounded with high solid brick walls, into which there is an entrance from the stables, and another entrance communicates with the back court of the house. Over the building, in a line with the entrance porch, rises a wooden tower, with a quaint old clock, surmounted by a curious and ancient vane in the form of a peacock.

We now enter the house, with its endless passages, staircases, and doors by the hundred, so complicated and difficult to

describe, that the writer can only throw down material for the reader to form his own picture—which, doubtless, will be the best after all.

You enter the hall, not by the centre, but by the left-hand corner. This is a wide, spacious place, which impresses you at once with its marked character. It is very low, with many beams in the ceiling, on which are remains of what is fondly supposed to be Saxon carving; it is, however with reasonable certainty considered to be a part of the original house, and to have been the kitchen and general living room of that primitive establishment. In its present state it is panelled with dark oak, formed into small square panels, the alternate ones of which are carved much after the manner of an old oak chest; the doors and their frames are to match, with

tiny carved panels running round the latter. The great fireplace is in the centre of the hall, facing you as you enter, almost human in its suggestiveness, and with its mantelpiece runs up to the ceiling. Opposite this, on your right, is a long high window, running the length of the hall, which is filled with stained glass, representing the arms of the family and the endless other families with whom they have been allied. The hall is furnished in a comfortable, old-fashioned way, and is the common property of the house at odd moments, and much used in the summer. So far, all is plain sailing enough. There are five doors in this hall, and if their position and where they lead to is carried well in mind, they will, it is hoped, prove a key to the house, which is as intricate as a rabbit-warren or the old

Ship Hotel at Brighton. The first door as you enter the hall on the left is the Colonel's room; another door on the same side beyond opens on the west stairs. A swing-door in the left hand corner, *vis-à-vis* to the front door, leads to the kitchen department. In the far corner to the right, facing the window, is a curious door folding into two parts, raised on a low step about four inches in height—a famous trap for the unwary—this opens on another little hall, in which is the drawing-room door to the right, and the *east stairs* in front of you. Between this door and the window, in the hall on the right, is the dining-room door.

The "Colonel's room" is the sanctum sanctorum of the old Squire, Colonel Doddingstead, formerly of the 16th Lancers, a regiment of which he is very proud. No

one dare address him as "Squire," however, except on Christmas Day, when it is graciously allowed. It is a large square panelled room, with deep cupboards and a long low window with a broad ledge. In this room many scenes in the story will take place.

You open the door of the west stairs and find yourself on a steep break-neck flight with deep steps; half-way upon the left you come to three steep steps, which take you to a strong narrow oak door. This leads to the Bride's Chamber, a charming room with two dressing-closets, and open to the full south. One of the closets is over the porch, with two pleasant windows and a little fireplace. Old rose trees outside cluster over the windows in summer.

At the top of the west stairs you come

to another door. This leads into a wilderness of passages, closets, doors, and rooms —the Colonel's bedroom; Miss Doddingstead's room (his daughter); his dead son's room; the Green Chimney room; the Oak room; the Rice-closet room; the Four-door room, with their dressing-rooms and endless doors. Many rooms communicate with each other, having three doors; nearly all with deep closets that would hold half a dozen men. The passages turn and twist, mount up and descend, with two doors and a space between them at certain points, in such an unintelligible manner that they defied all modern attempts to make out their reason.

Another staircase with a door leads up from these passages to the attic and store-rooms above, the apple-room, the box-room, the maids'-room, now a lumber-room, and

the servants' sleeping-rooms. A third set of stairs go down to the kitchens.

The swing-door in the hall leads to another extraordinary labyrinth of kitchens, back kitchens, servants' hall, housekeeper's room, pantries, store-closets, linen-room, plate-room, maids' work-room, the farmers' room, the brewery, the old and new dairy, the cider-room with its great press—no longer used, the laundry, larders, cellars, and the Brick Chimney room with its very remarkable old board of great width, cut from a tree struck by lightning, on which to brush the gentlemen's clothes.

We will stay an instant at the door of the housekeeper's room to say "Good-day" to the great Mr. Harrison the butler, and his skilful wife, housekeeper and head cook. Would the gentlemen like a glass of old

ale, and wouldn't the ladies like to see the plate-room? The ale is drunk—it must be!—the plate-room visited, and we return again to the old hall.

On our way we encounter a very fair good-looking young woman, with a certain air of superiority, and charmingly dressed, as neatly and freshly as if she had just come .out of the basket from the laundry —this is Mrs. Spillett, maid and confidential friend of the heroine, Mary Doddingstead, the Squire's granddaughter and heiress.

We now come to the haunted part of the house (excepting the old dairy—not at present to be described—which is under the entrance hall, and which is haunted by the "terrible" spirit mentioned before, where was supposed to be the entrance to the subterranean passage leading to the

church—lost to the family at the time the story opens). Passing through the door that folds back in the middle, we see the east stairs mounting up straight a long way before us. Halfway up the first flight—there are two in a direct line—is a door on the left, this leads to the *clock tower and the roof.* At the top of the first flight is a small landing with a door generally left open. From this landing to the right a short flight of stairs ascends to a passage. In this the first door on the left is the Don Quixote room, a gloomy, dismal place with a window near the ground, and the walls painted with the history of Don Quixote and his philosophical squire—a room much haunted by the maiden of the east stairs—generally allotted to young bachelors.

The next door to the left is the White

Closets' room, so called from two large closets, or dressing-rooms, which open out of it; these are panelled and painted white. This is the state bedroom. On the right is a peculiar-looking low door opposite the door of the White Closets' room. This opens into the old library, haunted by one of the squires, Richard Doddingstead, who shot his son through the window in the dark, when he joined the Government at the time of the Jacobites, and brought a party of them to search the house for a refugee. This room is too serious to be lightly mixed up with other descriptions, as it contains the ghostly writing on the window and two secret hiding-places. We return, then, to the first landing.

On looking up the second flight of steps you see fronting you the full length

portrait of a young girl of about seventeen, in a white dress with a red flower in her hair. This has a pale oval face of great sweetness, with sad, shy, dark eyes, dark brows, tan-coloured hair, and a full sensitive mouth of a deep crimson red (a beautiful and interesting face), and is the portrait of Margaret Doddingstead, who haunts all this part of the house, except the old library, where she has never been seen.

Ill-treated and even beaten by her step-grandmother—time, latter part of the reign of James the First—for not renouncing her lover, one Ralph Spillett, a wild youth—she had been shut up on a bitter winter night in the Don Quixote room, whence she escaped by the window (one of her shoes was found in a bush underneath) to the seashore; there she was discovered the

next morning by a fisherman lying dead under an upturned boat, where she had crept for shelter; and (tradition saith) "her face was whiter than the foam." The grandfather turned his wife out of doors, and made her pass a night in the garden; but she lived long enough to set up a very handsome monument to his memory and her own, according to the fashion set by James the First, and which will afterwards be seen in the old church, when we come to the rediscovery of the underground passage.

On the right of the picture, at the top of the second flight, is another door, high and narrow, by this you again mount two steep steps into a long straight passage from which open numerous other rooms, seldom used unless there is a press of visitors at the Manor. Out of this, one staircase

leads up to more servants' rooms above, and at the extreme end of the passage, another descends to the offices below. This latter has a strange peculiarity, having doors at the top and bottom and another in the middle, intended, it is said, to facilitate an escape by these stairs.

A short way down the passage on the right another door leads down by a short handsome flight of winding stairs to the Children's Garden—a delightful little set of rooms all to themselves, consisting of a panelled sitting-room, rather low, but square and comfortable, with pleasant windows, one forming a deep recess; two bedrooms, panelled also, and another small room—at this time turned into a carpenter's shop for our heroine—and a small entrance hall at the bottom of the stairs, from whence another wooden stairs

leads down outside the walls into one of the little gardens we have mentioned, a sheltered, pretty place, and only overlooked by the windows of the rooms just mentioned.

In the little hall was a *large closet under the stairs*, into which you could only enter by stepping over a high board at the bottom of the door. This whole set belonged to the second house (time, Edward the Third), and had always been used as the nursery until recently. The whole little block was called indiscriminately the Children's Garden.

This was occupied by our heroine, Mary Doddingstead; her maid, Jenny Spillett; her monkey, the King of Zanzibar; her parrot, the famous Mr. Grego; and in the garden below by her white goat, the Queen of Sheba; several stoats; Poacher,

an old weasel; some ferrets, and a cage of rats.

We return now to the bottom of the east stairs. Standing at the door that folds into two parts on our right in the little hall is a *large cupboard door*. A little way beyond it, on the same side, is the drawing-room. We first enter here. It is a fine, well-proportioned room, panelled throughout; the room is hung with family portraits of all sizes, and with old mirrors. The old furniture is in harmony with the place; it is lighted by three windows, of which the one in the centre is larger than the others. At the end of this room, near the entrance door on the right as you go in, is a large *old japanned cabinet*, with a writing-place at the bottom and with glass above. Inside is a closely packed collection of stuffed birds.

At the far end of the room, to the left of the fireplace, a door leads into a small but pleasant room, called the morning-room, which opens into the Magnolia Garden, and has an exit on the left to the servants' quarters; and beyond this room again is another small room full of old china, glass, and the countless little treasures that accumulate in an old country house. The morning-room is the exclusive property of Miss Doddingstead, the old Squire's daughter, where she plays at housekeeping, although she has little real authority in the house.

We return to the hall, and visit the dining-room, a square good-sized room, again panelled, and with handsome wooden ceiling painted by an Italian hand, two old clocks, portraits, sea pictures, and landscapes, with a curious old walnut-wood

buffet, which rises high to display the plate on state occasions; two windows with deep seats and cupboards underneath, and a beautiful steel fender on the hearth brought from Toledo. Once more we return to the door which folds into two parts. On the right is the cupboard door we have mentioned, which goes down to the ground, and on opening it you disclose a simple place with rows of narrow shelves for jam pots or other preserves. But on taking hold of the middle shelf and pulling outwards, the whole back of the closet slides out towards you, and then turns like a door on its hinges, and you find a narrow entrance to a little long room inside, between the walls of the dining-room and drawing-room. On entering, you are surprised to find that you can see distinctly through the cabinet of stuffed birds into the drawing-room, that there are

glass doors at the back of the cabinet which open inwards to the little room, and the occupant can open these, pass his hand through the birds, push open the other glass doors and find himself in communication through the birds with any one who may be in the drawing-room. At the end of this little room, high up, was a bed-place in the wall, as one sees in Dutch or Swiss cottages to this day. Low down in the right hand corner at the bed end was a small tunnel, so to speak, which communicated with one of the side cupboards of the buffet in the dining-room, and the occupant could be comfortably nourished by a skilful and devoted attendant—even should his enemies be seated at table in the dining-room—and it is alleged that one of the most important secrets of the Government during the time of William

the Third was surprised in this way. Over the bed was a sliding panel by which a second refuge could be found in case of extreme danger in another little dark chamber over this one, between the Don Quixote and the White Closets'-room above.

The house has the singular, most singular good fortune, for one of these old houses, by a happy accident (doubtless at the time thought to be a defect), to have all its principal rooms looking to the south and east. Altogether it is a warm, cheerful, and pleasant abode that one does not easily get tired of—for those who from long habit regard its ghostly visitants as part of the establishment.

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD CAPTAIN OF THE GOOD SHIP DODDINGSTEAD KEEPS A BAD LOOK OUT AHEAD.

THERE are two ways of conducting a story which are most commonly observed. One is to dash the reader off at a great pace, and then to proceed with more and more deliberation until the journey ends. The other, is to proceed very quietly for the first few miles, then to whip up your horses to the best of their going powers for the rest of the journey, taking care, however, to bring them into the stables a little cooled down at the end. The latter

is the mode of proceeding adopted by the writer.

If human beings were constructed like watches or steam engines, how comparatively easy it would be to draw their characters with consistency of action. Perhaps the weather bears the closest analogy to ourselves in unexpectedness and inconsistency. For, indeed, as we all know, some of us are more difficult and infinitely more tiresome to calculate on than even the weather at spring time. Others, again, can be gauged with tolerable nicety as to what they will do in any given circumstance of life. Fortunately (for the writer) the chief types of character that will appear in the present little story are of the latter kind, having that quality we call obstinacy which, however obstructive, trying, and difficult it may be some-

times to cope with, has nevertheless, when joined to goodness and sturdy honesty, a constancy and loyalty that can at any rate be relied upon. Obstinacy has also another fine quality that endears itself in the long run to those who are brought closely into contact with it—the power of attaching itself so firmly that no abuse or depreciation of others, no misfortune or poverty, or even indeed ill-treatment and careless neglect on your part (it must be careless and not deliberate), will destroy its affection for you. But on the other hand, a cold-blooded wound to its affection, its pride, ay, or its humility (of all the most sensitive), or a direct slight or want of appreciation of its good-will and intention towards you will never be forgiven, as being the worst crime against its own nature.

Mary Doddingstead was an orphan who had lived in much seclusion from the outer world. After the early deaths of her father and mother, her grandfather had retired from the world and society as much as his position as an active magistrate and county magnate would allow. She had, however, been educated with great care under a highly accomplished Dutch-woman, Miss Van Tromp, the daughter of a distinguished artist who had died leaving little but an honoured name. This lady, however, held advanced Radical opinions which the simple old Colonel had never even suspected or discovered, having taken her on trust on the warm recommendations of friends. He was himself a staunch Conservative of the knotted-oak kind, on whom no political storms or social change of any kind had any appreciable

effect. Miss Van Tromp had, however, behaved honestly to her charge in this respect, as in others; but the quick perceptions of Mary had not failed to catch by intuition the bias of her governess's mind from the books and matters which they discussed together. Her high moral character and strong sense of duty had, however, equally impressed themselves on her pupil's mind. She had returned to her own country about six months before the opening of this story, and Jenny Spillett had taken her place as friend and companion to Mary. Nor had our heroine gained any knowledge of general society and the world through the second-hand medium of novels, as the old Colonel would never allow one to enter the house, if he could help it. Mary had, however, read much modern literature, and for a secluded

girl of her age was remarkably well-informed on the general topics of the day, and had some real and sound knowledge of music, painting, and foreign languages, having worked hard from the age of eight to seventeen under Miss Van Tromp. Her general appearance may be briefly described in saying she strongly resembled the picture of Margaret Doddingstead. Some thought her only interesting and distinguished, many thought her beautiful, but all acknowledged she had a remarkably pretty figure, and that she had sincere and natural manners. She certainly had very beautiful rich dark eyes, and a ripe mouth with a very sweet expression. Her eyes, however, had sometimes that far-off look which belongs to those who have an alarming facility for slipping away from this crushing world, if adversity or mis-

fortune should press them too closely to the wall. Jenny Spillett thought Miss Van Tromp "would have worked her to death" if she had stayed much longer; but this young person may have been a little jealous on hearing so often of the virtues and accomplishments of the Dutchwoman.

But Jenny Spillett must now have a word on her own account, as she is our supplementary heroine who will play a very leading part in this story.

She was a capital specimen of the human cob, round, firm and well built, active and bright in movement, of invincible courage up-hill, knocking up more showy animals and gaining the owner's warmest affection. She had fine penetrating blue eyes, and bright wavy fair hair of remarkable length and abundance, a broad forehead well developed over the brows, a brilliant fair

complexion, and a generous mouth with much spirit and firmness, a short audacious nose, which, however, was pretty and individual, a roundish face, and a very well-formed little chin. Her history was somewhat remarkable. She was the daughter and only child of John Spillett, head coachman at the Manor, formerly faithful friend and servant of Mary's father. Detained by illness at Boulogne on his way home, his servant fell in love with one of the sturdy daughters of that most hard-headed aristocratic and exclusive race the Boulogne fishermen. After having conveyed his master safely across the water, John returned, and with the magnet of his fine blue eyes and his courteous manners drew his lady love also across the water in the Boulogne steamer, and married her after a tremendous fuss, and four French luggers

coming with much jabbering into Folkestone harbour in pursuit of him. The Colonel so admired the bride and this daring act of the two lovers, that he enabled her to assist her father in setting up a new lugger, which appeased the old fisherman's aristocratic pride in a remarkable manner. John Spillett was the son of the famous Tom Spillett, huntsman at the Manor when the Doddingsteads kept the hounds, a local celebrity of whom many stories are told to this day of his skill and daring in the field. Tom Spillett was son of John Spillett, Esq., of Ixstead, in the county of Kent, gentleman, of a good old family in East Kent of the thorn-tree kind (for may not old families be compared to trees in many ways? some growing up into lordly consequence and spreading out many fine branches that

overshadow their neighbours, and others which may be even older and yet ever remaining much as they were). This gentleman was wild and extravagant beyond all measure, from his youth upwards ever in the hands of the Jews, and finally dying in a madhouse without an acre or a penny in the world.

Jenny Spillett had little resemblance to her beautiful dark-eyed mother, except in the character of mind belonging to her race, their sturdy good sense and independence, and their manner of regarding things *au point de vue absolu*; but she had her buxom figure, personal strength and elasticity, though without clumsiness, and that air of something out of the common herd peculiar to the Boulogne tribe. She had also a way of balancing herself on her hips that, given the dress, one would never

have been surprised to see her standing with her arms akimbo or dragging in a lugger into Boulogne harbour. And yet she showed her father's race in the delicacy of her skin and ears, in the fineness of her wrists and ankles, and in the small waist which her mother had not. Her hands had short fingers, with square tips and extremely short flat nails, which were however delicate and pink. Altogether she was the happy result often seen from a union of pure French and English blood that has been a true love match.

Jenny Spillett was about five years older than her young mistress. She had been her friend, protector in ordinary, and playfellow at odd times from Mary's childhood, and possessed not a little influence over her. She had been sent by her father to a very good school at Canterbury, and nearly the

whole of his high wages had been spent on her education; but it had been her early passion to become a milliner and dress-maker, for the pure love of it, and for which no doubt she had great natural taste and capacity. Against her father's wishes she had been placed with the great Madame de Gros, in —— Street, so famous for her taste and skill, her rapacity, her obligingness, and her bullying carried to a fine art. After spending five years there, her father declared he would have her no longer remain in such a "devil's hothouse," and she returned and entered Mary's service. She had, however, a reason of her own for so doing, or she would not have shown such an exemplary example of obedience to parents. She was a great reader and close observer, as well as remarkably skilful with her hands; but she gave at first some

trouble in the house from her independence of character and what the old Colonel called her "unruly tongue." Mrs. Poyser was her great heroine and model. She would allow no one to enter her mistress's rooms, and did all the cleaning herself. This gave rise to her great squabble with Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, in which also the Colonel and Miss Doddingstead were against her, but Mary was on her side, and she carried her point.

Mary had just returned from a visit of six weeks into Gloucestershire, the first and only visit she had ever paid, and although she looked happy in a certain way, those who knew her best observed that she had a different expression and manner from her ordinary one, which did not even escape the Colonel's eye, little given to studying faces; but he only

thought it was the relaxing air of other English counties. Her visit, which was to have been a short one, had been prolonged in a manner somewhat incomprehensible to her grandfather, but as he was intent on fabricating a new lubricator for the old clock in the tower (which he would allow no one to touch or even repair but himself), the time had passed rapidly, as it does to our elders, and he grumblingly assented to her remaining, though he missed her continually, and daily asked when she was coming home.

It was a fine October morning, and Mary was seated in an armchair in her sitting-room, with a letter of many sheets in her hand. Mrs. Spillett (she must have now her proper title) was cleaning out the cage of Mr. Grego.

"What *shall* I do, Spillett?" said Mary,

taking up one of the sheets from her lap, arranging it with the others, and smoothing them tenderly between her fingers.

"I know what *I* should do, ma'am" (Mary was always addressed as "ma'am," by the Colonel's orders), "I should coax the Colonel out for a ride, and tell him all about it, and that he *must* give his consent."

"You do not know him as well as I do, Spillett; I fear he never will. Captain Wyldeman says he cannot think why grandpapa has such a deadly dislike to his father, unless it was something that happened between them, when they were both in the same regiment together, and that our only chance is to marry without his knowing it, and then he will be obliged to forgive me—but I will never do that," said Mary, her eyes looking far into space.

"Did you ever hear anything, Spillett, about Sir John and grandpapa?"

"I have heard a little, ma'am, from father. He says every one knows they had a disagreement, and that it must have been about a lady; but Mr. Harrison says he believes it was something very bad about money, and that Sir John is like all his family, a little queer."

"No, not *all*, Spillett. I am sure Captain Wyldeman is good; and Lady Worthingham says he is quite different from the rest of his family."

Here a violent scream from Mr. Grego, who objected to Spillett's somewhat rapid way of arranging his domestic comforts.

"Naughty bird!" cried Mary with unusual irritation.

"Oh, ma'am," resumed Spillett, when the bird had been quieted, "I dare say it's

nothing very bad, it is only the Colonel, who is so plump down in his notions, it is impossible for some people to please him."

"I fear it is worse than that, from the look in his face, when Aunt Augusta said something yesterday about the Wyldemans."

"Oh, ma'am, but this is a very different affair, when a real young gentleman who cares for you, and you care for him, and who has got everything else in money and all that, wants to marry you; he can't say 'No' only because he and the young gentleman's father don't agree."

"I am afraid he is getting very impatient," said Mary, glancing at her letter. "He talks of coming down here. I wish I had written and told grandpapa at once."

"I don't agree with you at all, Miss Mary," said Spillett, warming to her subject, and forgetting proscribed con-

ventionalities ; " a little bit of coaxing, with a nice kiss, is worth all the letters in the world when you want to get the better of a man. Men are mostly slow, and they get time to set their brains hard when they sit down deep over a letter; but if you can only catch a 'Yes' out of them, they keep to it for the most part, I must say, for men don't like to have it thought they go from their word, however much they would like to."

"Do you think an impatient man would make a bad husband, Spillett? He is certainly impatient," said Mary, pursuing her own train of thought.

"No, indeed, ma'am! they are much the easiest to manage. It's the cool ones you can't get round."

"And it's only a little more than three years to wait, and then I can do as I like, I suppose, really. But I won't disobey

grandpapa. I have quite made up my mind to that."

"I shouldn't wait three years!" said Spillett. "Men are always on the move, and women are so artful, and men are so scarce and so weak, you never know who may not entice him away from you; and who knows, also, the Colonel may be finding some one else for you."

Mary, at this dreadful thought, looked very sad; but she said, "she was certain Captain Wyldeman would never change to her, if he had to wait even till her grandfather's death."

"But you seem quite altered, Miss Mary, and not to be as sprightly as you used,—but that comes of caring too much for a man; when a woman does that she may just as well take to her bed at once, like other sick folks."

"Oh, the king! what *is* he doing, Spillett?" exclaimed Mary.

The king was the small monkey, who, taking advantage of the unusual absence of vigilant inspection was deliberately tearing photographs out of an album. When this melancholy exile from a land of refreshing cocoanuts, and a temperature of one hundred and twenty degrees, had been restored to order, Mary returned to the dominant key of her difficulty.

"I am certain he will say no, Spillett; and nothing on earth will make him alter his mind. It was very wrong of me to make an engagement; but he pleaded so hard, and I had quite made up my mind I should never care for any one else now."

"Don't you be too sure of that, ma'am; lovers are like everything else that's nice to the taste, till you get hold of something

else that is quite as nice, or perhaps nicer. I would never let any man think he was quite sure of me, until I was actually stitched to his back by the parson, and even then it isn't quite safe to let a man think he is the only sweet stuff in the world; they are apt to turn sour, and not to keep well if you do that."

Poor Mary opened her eyes a little at this philosophical love-making, and reflected that Miss Van Tromp's receipts for this kind of thing, when she had ever condescended to express an opinion on the subject, were of a very different nature, tending rather to entire trust and submission to the divine hero of a woman's affections; but, then, Miss Van Tromp had never had a lover, as the honest creature frankly avowed, and we all know distance lends enchantment, even in the matter of lovers,

but she only said, "What can I do, if he does refuse, Jenny?"

"But you mustn't let him say 'No,' Miss Mary; you must say 'Yes! yes! yes!' and stick to it. Old gentlemen are all very well when they keep to their marriage parchments and all that kind of thing, to see the lawyers and other people's relations are not digging a sly advantage somewhere; but when they come to put their finger into Cupid's cobweb, they must be taught that they are spoiling something worth all the old gentlemen in the world, and that can never be put together again."

"But you forget, Spillett, that grandpapa has our name to consider; and the Doddingsteads have always been very particular about their marriages and their good name."

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The young heiress was not pleased at Spillett's tone about her grandfather.

"Well, yes, Miss Mary, I quite enter into all that also. Good blood is a delicate matter to deal with, I know, though it is from being too nice that it sometimes gets thin and poor; and I know a good name is often blown away as easily as a thistle. But when it only comes to crotchets and quarrels, there is more of pride in it than anything else; and the Colonel would be worse than silly to put his feelings before yours. But gentle folks are three parts made up of feeling this and feeling that about something or another that plain folks don't feel anything about at all. You may be sure that it is only something about Sir John that wasn't nice and as it ought to be; if it was anything very dreadful, every one would know what is was, and

nobody seems to know anything exactly,—besides, you don't want to marry Sir John."

Mary was a little encouraged by this common-sense view of matters.

"I will go and see if I can find him, Jenny," and she departed, patting her hair with both hands as she went out of the room.

CHAPTER IV.

DON CARLOS.

Colonel Doddingstead had a passion for clockwork. In his younger days, when travelling with his tutor, he had obstinately persisted in remaining some time at Geneva, to be initiated into the mysteries of this delicate art. On his return home, he had triumphantly established his talent in this direction by setting on it legs after many years silence the old clock in the tower, which had been tinkered at by all the watchmakers in Canterbury, and which was a veritable Thomas Loombes of the time of Charles the Second (a specimen of

whose solid and excellent workmanship is to be seen any day at the Guildhall Museum and in a few private collections). The date and name of the maker were engraved on the dial; hence, from the solemn dignity with which it announced the hour on its deep and beautiful bell, and the name of the king who reigned when it was made, it had been early christened in the family, Don Carlos.

But alas, the original bell, so famed for the beauty of its tone, and said to have been of solid silver, had mysteriously disappeared long before the Colonel was born, and a tradition only of its excellence remained. (The reader, however, may be informed that the bell was on the premises all the time.) Great had been the distress of the Colonel about this bell; he would not have a modern one, and he had vainly

tried to get an old one that pleased him. Many ancient institutions and small town halls, both at home and abroad, had been astonished by a visit from the Colonel, with liberal offers to buy the bell of their clock, but as he was mostly regarded as a well-to-do lunatic, his offer had never been accepted—not taking into account that none of the authorites for the time being had any power to sell. Finally, after much searching of old books on the subject of bell-making, he decided to have one cast for himself in Belgium, but as he insisted on the makers following exactly under his own superintendence his own theories of form and mixture of metals, the bell when it was at last put in its place gave a sound that strongly reminded unprejudiced listeners of a blow with a hammer on an iron tank. The Colonel, however, en-

deavoured to pursuade himself that it had a beautiful tone, and was just what an old bell ought to be, though he occasionally admitted that if he had to cast it again he thought he could make an improvement.

As we have said, no one but himself ever wound up or ever repaired this clock; and except in very cold weather, trying to aged clocks as well as mortals, when allowances must be made, it was seldom wrong much more than ten or fifteen minutes in the week. Let any one ever venture to hint that was not the right time! "The railways, indeed! Every one knows they keep wretched time, and alter their clock for their own convenience." And the worthy old Rector, the Colonel's long-known friend, had to steal round and compromise matters on a Sunday morning before the service began. It is true the

congregation was somewhat small and rural, and not very rigid in its notions of time on a Sunday, but the Colonel was nevertheless much scandalized if they came in late to church, making a noise.

Justice must, however, be done to the honest old Rector. On a former occasion he had made a very sturdy fight for the good reputation of his own old clock in the church tower, regulated by a man from Canterbury; but so severe became the strain over this elementary point in home government, that the Rector, finding the Colonel hopelessly entrenched in his own opinion, decided that he was worth all the clocks and regulators in the county, and generously offered to place the church clock under his own management, which delightful offer was immediately accepted, and the terrible little storm which had threatened

to root up this old friendship passed harmlessly over—the two fine old gentlemen dining happily together the same evening at the Manor, the Rector arriving with the greatest punctuality as Don Carlos was striking seven. It is with regret, however, that the candid historian has to allude gently to a *certain rumour* which arose not long afterwards in the neighbourhood of something or another in the way of a catastrophe, or something of that nature, having occurred in the church tower—probably caused by birds building their nests—but as the Rector was absolutely ignorant of the matter, we can only conclude it was set going by the very gossiping servants at the Rectory, who missed not a little the periodical fresh-baked supply of news brought to them by the regulator from Canterbury.

The house was full of old clocks and watches, all repaired by the Colonel, and regulated once a week by Don Carlos, except the little clock in Mary's room, a new one from Dent's, and a birthday present from the old Rector soon after the quarrel. This the Colonel disdained to have anything to do with, and it is therefore not surprising that Mary was never quite in the right time, to the Colonel's distress, as he exacted great punctuality in the house.

There is perhaps no better way of testing a man's real disposition towards you than by taking him unawares. Mary stood at her grandfather's door a few moments before she knocked, her charming young bosom heaving with conflicting emotions, and as she stood there with her lips half parted, whatever difference of opinion there

might be as to her beauty when seen in full front, there could be little doubt about the beauty and harmony of her profile, and the general elegance of her small head and shapely figure. After knocking twice at the redoubtable door, where no one dared knock without a solid reason that would stand buffeting, she was told by a smothered voice to come in. Mary entered and found the Colonel in an old coat, bending over a large saucepan on the fire, the contents of which he was stirring with an old soldering-iron, and from which came an overpowering smell, compounded of burning fish oil, animal fat, tar, leather (it seemed), and other ingredients known only to the magician himself; this was the last and crowning boiling down of the great lubricator, on the composition of which he had spent months, and which

was to resist the combined attacks of frosts and summer heats, damp and rocking storms of sea winds, the eternal enemies of the venerable Don Carlos and his stout ally the old Colonel.

"Well, my dear," he said, looking round with an animated face, in which there was less sternness than usual, but still vigorously stirring with the soldering-iron. "You see I am very busy, but I thought it was you. What is it, my dear?"

"Oh, nothing, grandpapa. But can I help you? You know I am rather clever at cooking."

The Colonel reflected, albeit much surprised at this sudden arrival of volunteer aid. "Yes, I think you can," he said, after a moment's hesitation. "You can stir this while I get a mixture out of the cupboard—but mind you don't let it

boil over;" and resigning the iron into Mary's hand, he buried himself in one of the deep cupboards we have mentioned.

Mary stirred the odoriferous compound with all her might, but to her alarm it began almost immediately to boil up to the top; she called out to her grandfather, and by a great effort she succeeded in landing the heavy saucepan safely on the hearth before it had boiled over.

The Colonel came out of the closet with a pair of gold spectacles on his nose and a large bottle in his hand. Having assured himself that it had really boiled, he poured the contents of the bottle into the saucepan, and stirred it vigorously all together.

"Well done!" he said. "Capital! capital! You came just in time. Now that must stand until it is cold," and he removed the saucepan to a square deal

table, on which he did his clockwork, that stood near the window-seat.

"Have you finished for to-day, grandpapa?"

"Why?" he said.

"Because I should like to go for a ride; it is so fine after the rain, and I have not been out once since I came back."

"Well," said the Colonel, gazing out of the window, "it's a nice day for it,—if you like, my dear."

"In half an hour, grandpapa?"

"Well, yes, that will do for me nicely;" and Mary vanished to put on her habit and order the horses.

The Colonel rode Don Quixote, a famous old grey hunter of a much-contested age, and looked well on horseback, as was reasonably to be expected in a country gentleman, ex-cavalry officer. With his tall spare

figure, and upright square shoulders, his fresh face and white hair—the eyebrows still remaining black—he looked a very different and more dignified personage than the old gentleman in a faded coat bending over a witch's cauldron whom we have lately seen. Mary looked charmingly at home on her mare, Queen Elizabeth, and the Colonel was very particular about her turn-out on horseback, although she was not often seen by any one but himself and the critical Mr. Spillett, who always brought her mare to the door, and mounted her himself, looking at her with great pride as she rode easily away, settling her pretty and elastic figure into her saddle. Queen Elizabeth—so called by Mary, from the comical resemblance of her head to an old portrait of that queen in the house, and for her love of

fun in saying Don Quixote must escort Queen Elizabeth—had been selected by the Colonel and Spillett, who had both gone to town together for that purpose, as a birthday present to Mary on her seventeenth year; and, as far as is possible in the almost hopelessly difficult matter of horseflesh, united all the qualities in a lady's horse that money, opportunity, and good judgment could procure—having breeding without weediness, fine points, with remarkable shoulders for a mare, and high courage underlying much habitual gentleness.

Before long they encountered the Rector, and pleasant was it to see the cordial greeting of these two old worthies. The Rector had been an army chaplain and an old friend of the Colonel before he gave him the excellent living of White-

patch. He and Mary were also sworn friends. Had he not once risen in the dead of night, when she was dangerously ill, to go off to town as best he could, to personally conduct a great London physician to the spot? It flashed into Mary's head that here might be a friend in need; but as she rode on she reflected that it would be useless and even dangerous. A quarrel might arise that would make matters worse. If her grandfather would not consent, to please her, he certainly would not do so for any one else.

"Where shall we go, Mary?"

"Anywhere you like, grandpapa. Do you think the tide is out? We might give the queen a gallop on the sands."

"Very well, we will go and see," said the Colonel; and they set off at a brisk trot in the direction of the sea. On arriving,

they found the tide was rising fast, but there was still time to have a good spin; and the firm sands and the sparkling fall of the waves in the bright October sun, the ever freshness of the sea air, and the smell of the sea-weeds, gave all that could be reasonably desired for the best of earthly enjoyments, vigorous exercise amidst poetic and healthy surroundings.

Mary had turned over in her mind whether it would be better to make the attack on the way out or home, and she decided on the latter. The Colonel still enjoyed a brisk gallop, and the fine old Don Quixote could hold his own on the heavy sands yet, and happiness in any form, she knew by instinct, makes elders more yielding; she also felt less awe of him when they were out riding together than on any other occasion, and she knew

that he was proud of his pupil in horsemanship, and had even condescended to praise her self-possession and the excellence of her seat at full speed, when young ladies he thought were apt to be wild and lose all their grace.

After a good stretch, they turned and galloped back again to the lane leading up from the shore to the Manor. As they slowly rode up the ascent, Mary, with a bright colour in her face, and a nervous grasp of the reins which ruffled a little the even excellent temper of the mare, came to the charge. She began by talking about her visit into Gloucestershire and the people she had met. The Colonel was only moderately interested, until she mentioned the name of the Wyldemans; but his attention became rigid, when she went on to say that Captain Wyldeman had been

staying in the house, and she had seen a great deal of him, "and you can't think how nice he is, grandpapa—— "

"Well?" said the Colonel rather shortly, divining there was something more to come.

"And—he has asked me to marry him," said Mary in a low voice, making the fatal plunge at once, with as little splashing as she could.

"Well?" said the Colonel.

"And—I said—I said I would, grandpapa—if you consented."

"Shameful!" burst out the Colonel; "and without my wishes being consulted in the matter at all."

"I did not know anything, grandpapa, about Sir John and all that, until he told me afterwards; and he is the eldest son, you know, and he is in the Guards, and

every one says he is very nice—and I *do* care for him very much," said Mary, beginning to cry. "I did not know I could not marry him—no one told me anything. I thought we were brought together on purpose to like each other—other young people are, you know—and I am sure he cares for me as much as I do for him; he says that he did the instant he saw me."

"Did Lady Worthingham know anything of this?" said the Colonel with great sternness.

"I do not think so, grandpapa. We did not say a word about it. Captain Wyldeman did not wish me to tell any one until I had spoken to you. He wanted to write to you himself, but I would not let him until I had seen you first."

"Shameful!" again exclaimed the Colonel, thinking rather of Lady Worth-

ingham than of Mary or the audacious Guardsman. "It is quite impossible, Mary!

"Oh, grandpapa! I am sure you would like him, if you knew him. It will break my heart!" she sobbed, as the hot tears suddenly burst out anew, and began chasing each other down the front of her habit.

"Nonsense, child! Why you only saw him but yesterday for the first time in your life! I tell you it is quite impossible, Mary. He comes of a bad stock, and will not make you a good husband."

"But, dear grandpapa!" said Mary, trying to get near him and take his hand. Don Quixote, however, seemed to have such a decided objection to the mare, that he put back his ears and moved off.

"Quite impossible! quite impossible, my dear child! It is no use your persisting;

it cannot be. I cannot allow it; and I beg that I may not hear another word on the subject." And his black eyebrows twitched and his face had an expression of deep anger and annoyance, as he moved on into a trot, and poor Mary followed behind with her head bent low in tears over her horse's mane.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAIDEN OF THE EAST STAIRS.

It is a marked and well-known peculiarity of human beings, more particularly the male, that they will often outwardly direct anger against any object but the immediate cause of displeasure. The Colonel at dinner that evening found intemperate fault with everything, and Harrison, who had been twenty-eight years in his master's service, and, as he thought, thoroughly knew him, was completely at a loss to understand the cause of such an unusual and almost undignified display. His knives and forks were placed too near his plate, and

the wineglasses were the sort he detested (they had ever been the same since Harrison had known him); then the soup was wrong, it tasted like a pastry-cook's in Regent Street; the fire scorched him like midday at Calcutta—the snow was not on the ground yet! The saddle of mutton must have been walking on four legs the night before (it had hung at least a fortnight in the kitchen court); the woodcocks —a dish he was very fond of—were as rank as if they had been fattened upon grasshoppers; and the apples and rice—another of his favourite dishes, and always prepared by Mrs. Harrison in person—were as insipid as child's food, and were not fit to put before poor people at a workhouse. Miss Doddingstead (Mary did not appear) had to listen to fierce denunciations of the self-sufficient idiotcy of women, who,

married or single, a hundred years old or upwards, never attained a single scrap of real wisdom, or a right appreciation of the relative importance of things in this world. Mr. Croucher, the bailiff, who requested to see the Colonel a moment after dinner on pressing matters connected with a new tenant, was peremptorily refused. Old Shot, the famous and honoured retriever, who was rejoicing in the advent of the autumnal evening fire, was ordered off from his accustomed place on the hearth to take refuge in a cold corner; and, the most strange thing of all, after his daughter had retired the Colonel, who was supposed to have a violent antipathy to tobacco, never allowing guests at the Manor to smoke anywhere but in the farmer's-room at the end of the long passage near the old dairy, produced a huge meerschaum

pipe out of a little oak cabinet he unlocked, and having filled it with very mouldy tobacco from the same receptacle, smoked like a chimney on fire. Well might Harrison declare, when he sat down to supper in the housekeeper's room with a much perturbed air, that "the Colonel was gone clean mad."

As we have arrived at the housekeeper's room, the writer will remain there for a short time, confessing his weakness for these comfortable places and their, for the most part, worthy occupants. The society of this snug and cheerful old room consisted of Harrison, his wife, Mrs. Jenkins, Miss Doddingstead's maid—a hard-featured virgin of an impossible-to-guess age, who dressed very smartly, in a taste that imposed much on the rustics, and who insisted on going to church twice every

Sunday (although Mrs. Spillett declared "it was not to listen to the sermon"),—and this last-named young person, who looked in her cheerful and pretty dress among her elders like a late rose in November.

Harrison was in full swing on the Colonel's strange temper when Spillett arrived late for her supper, after having put her tearful young mistress to bed with the comforting assurance that "the door was never locked fast upon true love yet, if it didn't mind its foot being jammed a bit in the opening, and that the Colonel would come round safe enough in time, if she didn't wince too much."

"He must have had a loss of money, I think," he said; "that's the only thing I can account for. And yet he isn't particularly fond of money either, and doesn't seem much to mind anything in that way,

especially since Miss Mary's father died. I can't make it out."

"I have heard that old gentlemen is given to tantrums, particularly when they begins to get very old," said Jenkins.

"*He* getting very old—not he!" said Harrison. "He is nearly as young and fresh as I am, and he's good seven and twenty years older; he'll go to a hundred, like his grandfather, and live to bury you and me yet, Mrs. Jenkins."

"What's the matter upstairs?" said Mrs. Harrison.

"Oh, not very much," said Spillett; "she has only done herself up a little with galloping too fast with the Colonel."

"Ah! that's just like young ladies of her age," said Mrs. Harrison; "they will overdo themselves. But she ought to be careful till she's quite grown up; her

mother died young, and she don't look over strong, with her face the colour of cream."

"Nonsense! colour of cream, indeed! She's a sweet pretty creature, and looks the picture of health for a Doddingstead," said her husband; "she is only one of those nervous tempriments that are up one day and down the next, like—" he paused to find a brilliant simile, and then, as other men are sometimes known to do in moments of failure, plunged into rudeness —"like my old missus there."

"I don't know what you mean by your 'nervous tempers,'" said Mrs. Harrison; "I know where the real temper lies."

"Mr. Harrison, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Spillett stoutly. "Men are always accusing others of their own faults."

"Now, there's no occasion for you to be shoving in *your* oar, Jenny Spillett," said Harrison; "and you'd do much better, young one, if——" What it was she would be the better for doing did not at this present time appear, as he was interrupted by a loud bang of the swing-door that opened into the hall, and then some one rushing down the passage outside with violent screams. "Something has happened to the Colonel," said Harrison, starting up and going outside in haste.

At the kitchen door, on the ground, he saw the under housemaid in hysterics, with the other maids rushing out to her assistance.

"What's the matter?" he inquired.

No one answered, and he started off towards the dining-room. Opening the door quietly, he looked in, and found the Colonel

dozing gently in his armchair by the fire, with the great pipe still in his hand, and old Shot again in his place. Having satisfied himself that the sleep was natural, and wondering greatly at the smell of tobacco, he cautiously retired, much relieved, and returned to the scene of disturbance.

"Oh, Mr. Harrison," cried the maids in a chorus, "she's seen something, I am sure! She had to go up to the White Closets' room to fetch a blanket."

"I thought I told you maids I'd have none of you go pottering up those stairs after dark," said Harrison; "you are sure to fancy you see something, if you don't."

"But Miss Doddingstead said it must be found to-night, Mr. Harrison," said the upper housemaid. "I wouldn't have gone for anything; but Sarah said *she* didn't care, ghosts weren't true."

"Carry her into the housekeeper's room and put her on the sofa, Jane," said Harrison to his wife. "Now all of you be off to your supper again, and mind no gossiping and nonsense of that sort. She has only seen the picture by candlelight and thought it a ghost. She'll be all right presently;" and he helped to carry the still insensible girl into the privileged room.

Long was the disbelieving Sarah coming to her senses.

"She's very bad," said Mrs. Harrison. "Which of 'em has she seen, I wonder? We shan't keep a maid in the house if this goes on again. I thought all those ghostesses had settled down for good; it is more than five years now since they have shown themselves."

"Give her a little more brandy," said Harrison. "Not too strong—you'll choke

her!" he exclaimed, as Jenkins, who began to look like a bad sailor in a heavy sea, was pouring a wineglassful of raw brandy down her throat with a pinched and abstracted air. This heroic remedy, however, restored the girl to consciousness, and she was even dimly sensible of the honour of sitting on Mrs. Harrison's sofa. Harrison then put a few drops of a clear liquid from a small bottle he carried in a case in his pocket (containing two little rows of other small bottles), into a little water and gave it to her, and before long Sarah was able to give a connected account of what she seen.

"I got the blanket, Mrs. Harrison, which was in the yellow chest of drawers, as Miss Doddingstead said, though Nancy declared it wasn't; and I had just come out of the White Closets' room and was lock-

ing the door again, when something all of a sudden made me feel quite happy like, and as if I must dance, and I turned round and saw the young lady in the picture as plain as I see you now, Mrs. Harrison, come quite quick up the stairs like towards me from the landing till she got to the Quixote room and then she stopped all of a sudden, just an instant like, Mrs. Harrison, and looked at me with a smile exactly as Miss Mary's when she's pleased at something, and her lips moved as if she wanted to speak and couldn't. And then she seemed to go right through the Quixote door, without ever opening it a bit, Mrs. Harrison—that I am quite sure of, Mrs. Harrison—as I could see the door as plain as anything where I stood; and I thought first it was Miss Mary, who looked small like in the dark, and then I knew it was a ghost for

sure. I dropped the candle and the blanket straight, and seemed choked like till I got through the swing-door into the passage, and then I felt if I didn't scream, I should die;—and very sorry I am, Mrs. Harrison, to make such a trouble."

"That's just exactly the way houses get burnt down," said Harrison, paying little regard to what Sarah felt, but seizing the practical point of her flight. "Did the candle go out, Sarah?"

"Oh yes, Mr. Harrison, I am sure it went out; it was quite dark, Mr. Harrison."

"But I am not at all sure," said Harrison, snatching up a candle, and, forgetting example in his haste, he thrust it into the fire to light it, and started off to see for himself, having little confidence in a woman's assertion of being sure of anything beyond a matter of dress.

During his absence the great ladies of the housekeeper's room wished to have further details of what Sarah had seen.

"Was it the same dress as the one in the picture?" said Spillett.

"Oh yes, Mrs. Spillett—white, exactly the same, and I saw the red flower in her hair; and her eyes were just like Miss Mary's, only they looked deeper set like, and she seemed littler and more strange, and moved like somebody swinging in the air, and her look made me feel as if I was swinging too, and as if I should faint, and such as I never felt like before; and, let father say what he will, I shall never think that ghosts ain't true again."

Jenkins's white face and open eyes, with the entire abandonment of personal dignity as she sat bent forwards with her two hands on her knees and her right foot

awkwardly thrust out to the side without uttering a word, was a fine study of the supernatural from hearsay only on the human mind.

"I tell you what it means, Sarah," said Mrs. Harrison, with a kindliness in her tone which explained why she was so much liked by those under her—"it means, my dear, that we are going to lose you, and that you are soon going to get married! She only shows to those who are going to be married. I have never seen her all the years that I have been at the Manor."

Sarah's face brightened, and as she was one of those pleasant, homely looking girls, highly attractive to men of her class, this would seem probable enough under any circumstances; but as her father, who did not believe in ghosts, had an equal disbelief

in lovers who earned small wages, she had still to remain in service, though from the warm blush that came into her face at this intelligence, it was evident that there was some one whose poverty she was quite ready to share.

Harrison now returned with Sarah's candlestick and the blanket on his arm. "There is nothing to be seen up there!" he said; "you've fancied it, Sarah. Nancy has been putting it into your head."

"Oh no, Mr. Harrison. I saw it as plain as I ever saw anything; and Nancy never said a word to me about it, except that there were ghosts up those stairs after dark. But I thought it was an old gentleman, because I heard some one talking to father about it before I came here; and I feel as if I should never go to sleep in the house again."

"I tell you what it is, Sarah," said Harrison, who had been reflecting on the inconvenient consequences of this unshaken belief on the rest of the household, "you are a good girl, and do your work steady, and when Nancy is married next year, it is very likely Mrs. Harrison will ask Miss Doddingstead to give you the upper place, and you can't come into a fine old family—that there is plenty of you wants to do—without having what belongs to high families, and the Colonel's is the first in the county, and stands higher than all the new lords and barrowknights stuck on end one atop of the other with their toes turned out—and that's a thing a mint of money can't buy; and unless you want to go and be one of two, or it may be a maid-of-all-work with some of those root-up-everything radical sort, which is nothing

but envy and vanity without any skin on it, you'll know when you are well off, and keep a still tongue in your head and remember that high places is slippery."

"Oh, Mr. Harrison, I am sure no one has more respect for the family than I have, and father's the same; but I feel as if I could never go about the house after dark again!"

"That's all nonsense! You'll soon get used to that. Ghosts don't drive you about and shout at you as if you were a cab horse all day, and keep you up till twelve o'clock at night washing dishes in a damp place till you're ready to drop, and then have to be up at four again the next morning for the family washing."

Sarah remained in silent perplexity before the two terrible pictures offered to her mind.

"Perhaps she had better go home for a day or two," said Mrs. Harrison.

"Yes, that's it," said her better half, getting a woman's valuable hint of how to to deal with this new form of Kentish obstinacy, a matter which had been a continual exercise of ingenuity to him ever since he came into the county. "You had better go and tidy up your father a bit; he didn't seem very bright when I saw him the other day, and he's all alone now."

Sarah promptly assented to this arrangement, and it was settled she should sleep with Mrs. Harrison, as she declared she could not go to bed by herself; and Harrison was to drive her over early the next morning himself to her father's cottage farm, and return before prayers at nine.

"You may tell your father, but not a

word, mind, to any one else, Sarah," said Harrison, as he wished them "Good night," and departed to rig up a bed for himself in the pantry as in his old bachelor and sailor days.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HERO RESEMBLES A WAX DOLL.

The Colonel next morning looked pale and grave, but otherwise much as usual. Mary came down to prayers as Don Carlos was dismally striking nine, and the Colonel received his little maiden with unusual kindness and affection. Miss Doddingstead seemed in her usual fussy condition, and Mary was grateful to her grandfather for keeping her secret; and Harrison closed the door, as usual, on the long line of servants as they went down on their knees with military precision. After breakfast

the Colonel had to leave the trial of his interesting compound, and drive some distance to a magistrate's meeting; and Mary and Spillett retired to the Children's Garden, to discuss anew the important affairs of the moment, and attend to the wants of their little menagerie.

Mrs. Spillett's active mind seemed to be fuller for the moment of the apparition to Sarah than of her young mistress's trouble.

"No, Spillett, I have never seen her—she won't appear to me; but when anything is going to happen—I mean—when any of the women of our family are going to be married, she appears to the head of the house. If she does not, it is always unfortunate."

"That's terrible, Miss Mary."

"But I am not afraid of her, Spillett; she never does harm to any one when she

appears, though she sometimes gives warning. It is the ghost in the old dairy I am really afraid of."

"And have you seen that, ma'am?"

"No, but I heard all about it from Rachel, who was here before Nancy. It never comes above ground, so that you need not go near it unless you like; but it's *terrible*, and makes you turn quite stiff and cold, so that you can't move until it has passed you, and always foretells something dreadful to those it appears to."

Spillett dropped the tin box with Mr. Grego's seed on the floor. A ghost was the only thing of which this courageous girl had any real fear.

"But, please, Spillett, do not say any more about them, and on no account talk to the other servants about it; the Colonel will be very angry if he hears of

it, and Jenkins tells Aunt Augusta everything, and only the other day grandpapa asked me again if you had not got an 'unruly tongue.'"

Spillett remained silent for the present on this absorbing matter, and she set to work to sweep up the seed on the floor.

When the Colonel had selected that morning his batch of letters as they lay on the hall table, it crossed his mind whether there was any correspondence between the lovers, and though he had a natural repugnance to anything in the shape of prying as belonging to the order of ill-bred impertinences and the dangerous curiosity of women, yet he thought that, under the circumstances, he was justified in departing from this rule, and so he proceeded to examine Mary's letters; but there was

nothing that looked like a lover's letter, unless he wrote a feminine or tradesman-like hand. He however made a note in his mind for future guidance.

A very active correspondence, however, had sprung up between the noisy and omnibus-ridden quarter of Knightsbridge and a quiet remote spot in the county of Kent, in which, though the Colonel's name frequently appeared, he bore no part in the labour of composition; and Mary had received a letter that morning of many sheets together, with an elaborately painted photograph in a red velvet case with silver corners, clasp, and monogram, containing the portrait of a young officer in the uniform of the Guards, with very bright blue eyes, a long fair moustache, and a waxy complexion that would have done honour to a hairdresser's window. This had been

done expressly for Mary, who had never seen her young hero in uniform.

Sad and almost useless as it seemed now, Mary could not help dwelling on this absurd representation, which, though grateful as she was to the donor for the trouble he had taken to please her, she could not help thinking somewhat of a libel. "What do you think of him, Jenny?" she said, as her old friend and companion bent over the back of her chair to look at it.

"Well, Miss Mary, I should say it's like him, but I only saw him a few times out of the window when he had his hat on, and I thought he was a fine-looking gentleman and had a nice expression; but if he's like that, he's too pretty—and, you know, I don't admire fair men."

"That is because you are so fair yourself, Spillett," said Mary, with a shade of annoy-

ance, and he is not the *least* pretty; it is only this horrid painted up thing. He has got a fresh, healthy-looking face, but not a bit like that, it makes him look like a wax doll. I wanted him to give me an ordinary photograph, but he said he had never had one done of him since he was a boy, he hated it, and his family did not care, and no one else had ever wanted one really, he was sure."

"Oh, that shows he isn't very vain, Miss Mary, for most handsome men are in love with themselves, and then they expect you to be everlastingly admiring *them*, and not to object how many others do the same. *I* wouldn't marry a handsome man if he made fine eyes at me like the full moon till he cried; unless it was to take him down a bit, and teach him handsome is that handsome does."

Mary reflected that her lover had very fine eyes, and that they had undoubtedly been directed continuously towards herself not unlike a full moon; but, then, they were honest eyes, and more beseeching than demanding, and she wondered where Spillett had learned to be so hard in her judgments of men.

"You see, ma'am," said Spillett, continuing her train of thought, "there are two sorts of handsome men—those who say a great deal with their tongue, and those who say a great deal with their eyes. Now it's those who hold their tongue and look that are the most dangerous to women that are not up to them; because the cleverest man, if he talks much, and if he is thinking about himself all the time, and how much you must admire him, is sure to get a bit down from what you thought of him at

first, if a woman is not a sort of a man's big doll; but the handsome man, who only looks at you nicely a good deal and says little, you think he might say a great deal more if he liked, and that stirs you up, and makes you think about him and his good looks."

"Where did you learn so much about men, Spillett?" said Mary, her astonishment at this accomplished knowledge making her forget her own trouble for the moment.

"Oh, Miss Mary, when I was at Madame de Gros's, we used to go out to balls two or three times a week sometimes; and there we used to meet, more often than people would think, with real gentlemen, and when we were at work, we used to have a regular parliament over them."

Mary was interested in a way she could

not have accounted for to herself. "And don't you find it very dull down here in the country, after that?"

"Well, ma'am, I did at first, but now I am glad, because I used to often get sick of it, and the way the girls talked—those French girls are the worst of all, they are dreadful about men—and I used to feel as if I should get wicked too; and father is right, London is a slippery place for young girls if they are the least good looking," and Spillett glanced at herself over Mary's shoulder in the glass above the mantelpiece, which certainly reflected a very fresh and attractive-looking young woman in a dainty blue and white cotton dress—but then, as none of us like to believe, some glasses flatter, or rather the light which is thrown upon us at the moment.

"But how did you understand them,

Spillett? They don't all speak English, do they?"

"Oh, Miss Mary, some do; but before I came away I could speak French pretty well, and, you know, I learnt a good deal from poor mother, and I got to understand quite well what they said, only they talk so fast I could not follow them at first; and there were some English girls also, a good many at busy times, and we used to have a sort of half and half talk. The English girls were always getting in love with somebody; but the French they are much too sharp for that, they only want to get presents, which they go and sell again directly."

"Did you fall in love with any one?"

"Well, Miss Mary, to be honest, there was one gentleman I—liked a little—and I believe he is in Captain Wyldeman's regi-

ment, and I think he liked me a little too; but I was not going—but a gentleman in his position could never marry me, that's evident, and so what was the use of that? But I am almost sorry I ever saw him, for I don't feel now as if——" Spillett stopped short in her revelations, and the colour which had mounted in her cheeks turned to paleness, and a sad look came into her deep blue eyes.

The good secluded rustic Mary Doddingstead remained silent with astonishment, but was too delicate to question her further.

"I don't think he looks conceited either, Miss Mary," she said, changing the conversation, and glancing again at the noble work of art.

"No, that he is not, he doesn't think enough of himself, poor fellow; and you can't think how kind he was to poor Miss

Ransome, the governess, that night we had the little dance, and no one took any notice of her, because she is very shy and does not get on at first with strange gentlemen, and I am afraid she guessed, because she praised him so to me my face quite burnt. And she said it was only poor girls who were good that knew how selfish young men are in these days ; and whatever I did, never to marry a selfish man. I mean to send her a beautiful little gold watch on Christmas Day, without letting her know where it comes from ! " The young heiress felt, even in the midst of her trouble, that power to do a kindness was very pleasant.

" It's wonderful how some women like conceited men," said Spillett, not taking a remarkable interest in "poor Miss Ransome."

" I think it is because most women down at the very bottom don't think enough of

themselves. Some conceited men think that women are just made for their use, like a pair of gloves. If they fit nicely, it's all very well; but if they don't, they try another. But the way to manage them is to make them feel small. They will soon come round if they are good for anything; but if they don't, you may be sure they are spiteful, and that's the worst kind of man to deal with, because they are little. You never know what any man is really worth, till you take him up and throw him down hard on the ground to see if he'll break."

Mary put down the photograph, and turned over her letter again, as Spillett rushed off to reduce the king to order, who was shaking the bars of his house with violent impatience to get out.

"Oh, that tiresome monkey! You had better let him out, Spillett;" and then tears

came into her eyes as she began to think again of the catastrophe of yesterday, hardly yet realized. "I must write and tell him of it," she continued, "and that he must not write to me any more. I have been very false and deceitful to grandpapa already, and he would never forgive me if he knew all, and I would rather be anything than that."

"All's fair in love and war, Miss Mary. The Colonel should have sent you down into Gloucestershire with your nose painted red, if he did not want what's natural to happen; it's too late now, and it would have served him right if you and Captain Wyldeman had gone off by the Dover boat last night. I would yet, if he doesn't come round." Mrs. Spillett evidently was not going to be charged with an unruly tongue for nothing.

"You must not speak like that, Jenny. Grandpapa is very good; he only forgets I am no longer a child. I am sure he cares for me more than anything in the whole world, and I will never do a wrong thing that will disappoint him, and make him sad in his old age; he feels everything a great deal more than you think, and you know he has had great trouble—when poor papa died."

"Yes, ma'am, I know all that. But you are a regular Doddingstead, too, as father has often said; and now you have been allowed to give your heart away, you'll never change, and will be unhappy all your life, if you can't marry the gentleman you care for—that I know well. But you are very young, and the Colonel is very old, and he ought to give way."

Mary felt herself that she could never

really care for any one else now, and wept in silence at the sad alternative before her.

"Don't take things too much to heart, Miss Mary, it's early days yet; wait a bit, and then when the Colonel sees you have got your heart right into it for good and all, he's much too fond of you to go on punishing you for ever, I know."

"I fear, Spillett, he won't change—he never changes about anything; and he rode on, and would not hear another word, and he always does that when he has quite made up his mind."

"You must be very nice to him, Miss Mary, and not let him think you are the least angry, or are going to fight him about it; it is no use fighting some men, you must circumvent them—I fear Miss Doddingstead can be no help to you."

"Oh, not the least—quite the contrary! She only makes him very angry, and more determined than ever to go his own way. I think, Spillett, if you will go down now and look after the queen and poacher, I will write my letter. Don't give them too much!" And Spillett departed to attend to the animals in the small garden below.

We must now descend for a short time to the servants' department. Harrison was in one of "his tempers," as the two unfortunate footmen could answer for. Nancy had given warning to Mrs. Harrison, followed soon after by Eliza, the kitchen-maid, and then Ruth, the scullery-maid; and that excellent and quiet woman was "much put out," as she disliked changes—"they were never a credit to mistress or maid." And everything had been "going on so nice, with hardly a word, and they were

good servants, not easy to replace, or to be fitted in again at a day's notice."

Harrison had come to the rescue, as he always did when serious weather threatened, leaving his wife at the helm in calmer moments. He had been giving the ghost-scared maids a vigorous antidote in the shape of an appeal to their worldly interests. They were like a parcel of sheep, if one broke out into a barren field, all the rest followed. Did they think comfortable places like the Manor were to be picked up on every hedge? What if there were ghosts?—which he didn't believe there were—they didn't eat people up alive. Did they want to go tramping about the country, living upon their friends till they got other places they didn't know when. Look at Jane Collard; she was ten months out of place, and then had to go

and live with a curate and do the washing, and be looked down upon by all her relations. And what if there were ghosts? All high families had ghosts; they came with the property and old parchments. It was only common servants, without any wits in their head, and that could never get into the first families that didn't understand that. Did they want to be thought small of, and as having no *esprit de corpse* to leave the Manor family for a thing like that?

"Oh, but, Mr. Harrison, there is so many of them!" said Nancy. "Other places have only got one at the most."

"What of that?" said Harrison. "One ghost is common. Every old house has got a ghost somewhere in these days; if they haven't, they make them, until you get tired of hearing of 'their ghost.' If

there is any ghost at all, why shouldn't there be a good lot of them? And why shouldn't they have a little good society now, when most of them have been accustomed to it when they were alive?—only *they* amuses themselves by hiding out of each other's way! I shouldn't mind if there was a ghost in every room in the house, it makes you feel that the plaster is dry, and that other people have been comfortable there before you, and that the place is solid, and not a pack of cards as they build in these days. So don't you be a conventicle" (this word, the exact meaning and application of which was only known to the learned orator himself, had a tremendous effect) "and wanting to have a one-ghost house like a one-horse shay!"

Eliza, who had the most good sense in

her head, rebelled from the ringleader, Nancy, and said she wouldn't be in a hurry, and would think about it before Mrs. Harrison told Miss Doddingstead, and the others said they would think about it too.

But Harrison had got up so much steam over this threatened rebellion, that it was not to be all expended on such an easy victory, and he then turned on George and John in the pantry and their accumulated small neglects and transgressions were all thrown out into a heap and stamped upon, till John, who had a temper also, said he should give the Colonel warning, and George had a sulky expression and dogged manner of answering that suggested warning also. Then Mrs. Harrison came in for her share. But she, poor woman, knew beforehand "that of

course it was all her fault." Why had she allowed *any* of the maids to go doddering up those stairs after dark? The same botheration had happened before. Miss Doddingstead's orders, indeed! They had nothing to do with it; she was always fussing and upsetting the concerns of the house about nothing at all. How often had he told her (his wife) that the maids were to be made to understand that she was the real mistress. It would be a nice thing if they had to go through all that business again that happened five years ago, when they couldn't get a maid to stay in the house for love or money. She had better lock up the farmers' room, it was no need to be everlastingly cleaning that and having the maids down there with their heads together like a parcel of geese in a thunderstorm. The Colonel

kept the library locked and never had that cleaned; and she might tell Eliza that she would have her wages raised next Christmas, and that would keep the others quiet too, thinking they were going to get the same. "It's money, Jane, that keeps steady on their legs, be sure of that."

Nor did the matter quite end here, for as the storm had not altogether abated when the Colonel came in—who had himself had rather a contentious meeting with his brother magistrates and was otherwise full of unpleasant thoughts—these two quickly came into collision over the very smallest of matters, and if a visitor had not at that moment called, there is no saying how Harrison's eight and twenty years of service might have ended, as the Colonel allowed no one the luxury of having a fine temper but himself.

CHAPTER VII.

SIR PETER GRANDISON, AND THE DISGRACEFUL CONDUCT OF MR. GREGO.

THE next morning the Colonel sat down in his room to write a courteous but severe reprimand to his old friend, Lady Worthingham. But when he had got nearly through his letter, and came to "a request" that she would use discretion—he put down his pen and reflected that he had already been much deceived in her on this point, that she had no discretion, and it would be safer to say nothing at all to her about the matter. Having worked off

some of his indignation by the act of writing the letter, he tore it up and threw it into the fire, and then sat back in his chair to reflect again on this "unfortunate occurrence." It came upon him as a painful shock to his quiet and retired habits that the time was close at hand for him to find a suitable mate for his little lassie, and great would have been the disturbance to Mary's peace of mind—even if the visit to Gloucestershire had not taken place—if she could have known who were some of the eligible persons selected for this honour that presented themselves to the Colonel's mind. He reproached himself for his negligence in allowing her to stay away so long, and his over confidence in the wisdom of others in a matter that did not touch them nearly, and of his want of observation of the rapidity with which

time flies. But this latter should be no longer a reproach to him, he would at once seize that venerable runaway by the forelock. Soon after, the Colonel's bell rang with such marked decision and impetuosity, that Harrison instinctively felt no one but himself was equal to encountering the emergency at the other end of the wire.

Now, he was at that moment cheerfully occupied in preparing the materials for his yearly October brew of ginger-beer, to come in ripe and mature for the following summer, according to the good old system, a beverage, in the wholesomeness of which he had great faith, and in the making of which he was an adept, although he had some difficulty in convincing the aristocratic fastidiousness of the servants' hall, that it was a drink permissible for any one but very common people. He had been

graciously consulting John, who seemed to have got over his temper also, about some new kind lately come into fashion. John's people were supposed "to be in that way," and manufacturers of summer drinks. Having thrown off a large leathern apron, in which he looked like a master saddler intent on important orders, he put on his coat, and hastened off to answer the Colonel's bell, which however rang again before he could reach his door.

"Harrison," said the Colonel, when he entered. "I am going to give a ball."

If the Colonel had informed him that he was going to be married again, he could not have been more taken aback.

"A ball, sir!" he said.

"Yes. Why not a ball?"

"Oh, well, sir, that's as you please."

"Well?" said the Colonel, sitting back

in his chair, with an air of having now given the master idea, Harrison was to be responsible for all the rest.

Never had Harrison's tact and readiness been more sorely tried, as a ball was quite out of his line, there never having been one at the Manor since the coming of age of Mary's father.

"Well?" said the Colonel again, getting impatient.

"When is it to be, sir?" Harrison said at last.

"Oh, that is easily settled. In about a week or ten days, perhaps."

At such a lamentable inferiority of knowledge as to the nature of balls, Harrison's genius rose to the occasion.

"It can't be done in a week, sir, or even three weeks, hardly, if it is to be a regular ball."

"Why not? Of course I wish it to be a real ball."

"How many people do you mean to invite, sir?"

The Colonel hitched himself in his chair. This was a very stiff question, and the magnitude of the affair began to outline itself in the distance.

"Well,—the usual number, I suppose; but I mean it to be very—in fact—very select."

"You won't get enough people down here in the country, if you are too particular, sir; and I have always heard that an empty ball room is worse than a funeral. You will have to invite a lot of people to the house, and then you must get the officers from Chatham and Canterbury, and the gentlefolks about must fill their houses. Then there is the supper,

and the band from Canterbury, who are much engaged, I have heard say, as the winter comes on; and then the ladies must have time to get their dresses, and they won't come if you hurry them—that Mrs. Spillett can tell you, sir."

"What does Spillett know about balls?" said the Colonel with great contempt. Then a brilliant idea came into his head, and he took up *Whittaker* from off his writing-table. "Let me see," he said, "to-day is the 7th. Capital! capital!—we will have it on the 5th of November, Miss Mary's birthday."

"Yes, sir, that might do, if we are sharp about it, and set to work at once."

"Very good, then, that's settled," said the Colonel, with increased respect for Harrison's powers, and his own dramatic inspiration in the arrangement of dates.

"You will tell your wife to be prepared about the supper and the rest. I won't have any pastry-cook's rubbish, mind. But surely there is time enough for all that yet?"

"And the wine, sir! You won't use your own champagne?"

"Certainly I shall! Do you think I want to have my guests poisoned with bad wine? Let me know what you have got, and I will order some more." Now about the only new idea that had ever got into the Colonel's head was the healthful value of good champagne, a sad knowledge which had to come to him accidentally at the time of his son's long illness and death, and he drank very often a modest quantity of Pommery Brût, of a great vintage, and he saw no reason his guests should fare worse than himself.

"But the first thing to settle, sir, is the

number of people you are going to have. I have heard say that if you make sure of a good dancing lot of gentleman of the right sort, the rest will all follow at the first bid, and some won't even wait to be asked, but will ask themselves."

The Colonel had meditated that the legitimate, orthodox, and least objectionable way of presenting a marriageable young lady to the world was of course to give a ball; but this appalling picture of a "good dancing lot of gentlemen," and people who might be anybody besieging him for invitations, made him begin to repent of his undertaking. He only said, however, "Very well, Harrison, I will think about it."

"But you will order the Canterbury band at once, sir?"

"No, certainly not!" said the Colonel

with great energy; his idea of that famous institution being confined to the magnified braying of brass and screeching of wind instruments he had been condemned to endure at sundry agricultural meetings, and which had left a very lively impression on his mind. "No! I shall order one from town."

This was a shock to Harrison's notions of what "we" at Whitepatch ought to do in the matter of county patronage. And as Miss Mary's coming-out ball—for such he had already decided in his own mind it was to be—would be quite a county affair, he thought the bringing of a band from town would have a chilling effect on the Canterbury tradespeople prejudicial to a favoured attention to orders and his own little affairs at Christmas. But he knew the Colonel too well to offer any direct

opposition, making only the remark that, "as they went to all the other gentleman's houses, he thought the Colonel meant to patronize them also." Harrison and the Colonel had quite two different bands in their heads.

This sly little shot told, and the Colonel reflected a moment on his unconstitutional intention. But as he meant the ball, now he had decided upon it, to be carried out in the very best way, his own recollections of gayer days made him aware that the band was of the first importance as a matter of practical detail to make a ball go off with spirit and agreeableness; and he held, in his own mind, to the condemnation of the band from Canterbury.

"Very well, then, Harrison," he said with an air of dismissal; and Harrison departed to spread the news of this coming

event, which eclipsed for the moment the sensation of the night before, and even John's new receipt for ginger-beer.

The Colonel thought for a moment if he should call his daughter into consultation, but as poor Miss Doddingstead was one of those good, well-meaning, blundering, fussy, and impossible creatures whom no one ever obeys or consults, he decided he would not,—making that little mistake all we wiseacres are apt to do in our estimation of the stumbling beings about us, as she was a walking encyclopædia of small information about the friends, neighbours, and connections of the family; but from a habit she had of meddling at the wrong moment and of giving her information with an air of doubt and uncertainty, no one ever gave her credit for any accurate knowledge whatever—so valuable

is it in this hesitating world, when you see black, to stoutly maintain it is white, until others negate their own senses and find that it is white after all!

The Colonel then set to work to make a list of the people to be invited, but he had not got very far when Harrison's terrible advice to obtain "a dancing lot of gentlemen," the truth of which he was forced to admit, recurred to him again with disagreeable force. He reflected a moment, and then he had another brilliant idea—he would put this particular matter in the hands of his old friend and companion-in-arms, Grandison, a capital fellow, who united great popularity with a fine dignity of the good old school (at least, that was his idea of him), now general in command at Chatham, a man much in the world and who knew everybody. So,

abandoning his list for the present, in which he had only got to about ten names, he set to work to write a letter to "Grandison," inviting him and Lady Grandison and their daughter to pay him a visit for this great occasion, begging him to do him the further kindness of supporting himself with a good staff of dancing young gentlemen whom—here the Colonel found himself again in difficulties; he did not wish to be guilty of impertinence, and yet he was aware of the extremely light way in which balls were regarded by military men, tied down to monotonous duties in a garrison town, and he feared that even Grandison would not see the necessity of a very careful choice in the matter of a ball—"whom I would also wish to do me the honour of being guests in my house," at last he wrote, trusting that hint

would be sufficient, "as there is plenty of room in the old barrack" (let any one else call it an old barrack!) "for as many good young fellows as will trust themselves to my care." He then modestly alluded to the new lubricator which he had invented for the benefit of the clock, and which he thought promised to be a success, —Grandison perhaps had not forgotten the old clock (no, indeed! he might be sure the General had not in any way forgotten it, as it had lost him a train and delayed a court-martial!)—and with a little exceedingly mild and harmless gossip about mutual friends, as befitting old comrades, he finished his letter, sealing it with his big seal (intended for another little hint), and addressed it to "General Sir P. Grandison," etc. He then suddenly rose and quitted the room.

Mary was seated in the Children's Garden, with another long letter from Knightsbridge in her hand, and very touching it was, and tears were in her dark eyes as she thought that at that moment *he* also was reading her cruel letter of yesterday, in which she had expressed with loving and gentle firmness that all must be at end between them, "at any rate for a long time, though she wished him to be quite free," when a grave step in the little hall and a knock at her door startled her into immediate precautions. Secreting her letter, she went to the door, where, to her astonishment, she found the Colonel, who rarely if ever paid her a visit.

"May I come in, my dear?" he said.

"Oh yes, grandpapa!" she exclaimed with exaggerated willingness, to hide her confusion; and, making room for him to

pass, she closed the door again behind him.

The Colonel stood with his back to the fireplace, and came to the point at once. "I am going to have a ball for you, Mary, on your birthday."

Mary was nearly as much astonished as Harrison; but this feeling was soon succeeded by wonder at what it could all mean. Was it possible he was going to relent? She feared not. "Oh, grandpapa, that will be delightful!" she exclaimed, with as much cheerfulness as she could assume; but this young lady was much too honest and sincere to be a good actress in private life, and there was a slight falsity in the ring of her voice that did not escape even the Colonel, unobservant as he was of these fine shades.

"Yes, and I have written to the General

and asked him to come for it, and bring a whole regiment of dancing young monkeys."

Any one who knew the Colonel would have perceived that he was unusually moved or nervous, or he would not have made such a joke as that. In fact, now he was in the child's room, with all her well-known small properties about her that had been collecting from childhood, many of them his own gifts, and when he recognized the sad look in her eyes, notwithstanding her assumed gaiety, it wrung his heart to be obliged to be so cruel to the one great object of his affections in this world. "But it could not be! he could *never* give her to a son of that man." (What had really passed between the two men no one ever knew, as Sir John Wyldeman had been discreet

enough to hold his tongue, and the Colonel would never condescend to speak a word on the matter.) It had been his intention when he came up to find out if there was any one she would particularly like to ask for the occasion; but he felt now that might raise a hope to be only immediately crushed, and that the suggestion even might be painful, so he changed his intention, and by way of retreat began to display all at once an unheard-of interest in young ladies' dresses—a matter of which he was nearly as ignorant as a chimney-sweep.

"You must have a smart gown, Mary," he said. "I should think something blue would be very nice"—he remembered her mother looking remarkably well in "something blue."

Poor Mary could not help smiling at this delightful innocence.

"No, dear grandpapa," she said gently. "I believe I ought to wear something all white, and very simple."

"Oh yes, white would be very nice, too; but it must not be too simple. You must remember who you are, and look right on parade."

"A young girl when she first appears," said Mary, "is expected, I believe, to be very simply dressed."

"Ah, well, but I think I remember seeing young girls with very smart gowns, too, in a ball room."

"But I don't think it could have been their first ball, grandpapa."

The Colonel, finding he had got on a wrong road again, turned back to try something else.

"But, then, you must have a necklace, Mary. I have got a very fine old diamond

one somewhere I can give you; in fact, I know there are several you can choose from."

"No, dear grandpapa, I must not wear diamonds, either. I should look like an old married woman!" she said, a look of fun stealing into her gentle face, which, however, soon died out, leaving it more sad than before as she thought how nice it would have been if she could have looked forward to soon wearing them in her own right.

"Well, then, bracelets!" said the Colonel.

"I think I might wear one, if it is not too large or old-looking."

"Very well, then," said the Colonel, delighted. "I will send at once to Garrard's and have some down for you to choose from. I suppose, young madam, they must be the latest novelties?" and

he wondered, as he had done before on other occasions, at the remarkable persistence of young people to be in the newest fashion, however ugly or unbecoming it might be.

Having gained this one little doubtful victory, he thought it prudent to retreat from such uncertain ground, and he again changed the subject, returning to his original idea in a modified form.

"You must have the house very gay, you know, with flowers and that sort of thing. Wouldn't you like Miss Grandison or some one to come and stay with you beforehand to help?"

"No, thank you, grandpapa; Spillett is very clever about things of that sort, and I think we should do better by ourselves."

"Very well, my dear," said the Colonel,

gaining more caution and submitting to these oppositions to his will with remarkable and unusual mildness; and he began to look about the room. Now, although he had a decided dislike to all Mary's monkeys, parrots, and goats—as a strange taste in a young girl—yet he would never allow any one to interfere with her, partly because she seemed so fond of them, and it gave her something to do that took her out into the fresh air, but also because he had received several strong hints that he ought not to allow them; so, with a delightfully grim smile of sham benevolence, he stooped down over Mr. Grego's cage, and proceeded to play with him.

Now, this bird, whose history and wonderful age will be afterwards referred to, was very amiable and good-natured for one of his irritable race, and was also

highly intelligent, as are in truth all really good parrots, though they seldom get the credit of it, and his fine instincts told him at once that the Colonel was an enemy in disguise, whereupon, with a wild scream of fear and outraged dignity, he pounced savagely on the Colonel's finger.

"Confound the brute!" he said, starting back. "How can you, Mary, keep such things?"

Mary expressed her great sorrow, and set to work to bind up his bleeding finger.

Then the Colonel was introduced to the King of Zanzibar, whom he very carefully abstained from touching, however, though Mary wanted him to feel how beautifully fine and soft was his coat; then he was invited to look at her woolly white majesty the Queen of Sheba through the window, as she was nibbling in the garden below.

And a very handsome pair they looked, as Mary stood with her long delicate hand placed lovingly on his shoulders. At last the Colonel, finding his courage was in danger, beat a hasty retreat to "write his letters," after an affectionate kiss from Mary and many thanks for his visit. As he stumbled up Mary's half-lighted stairs, surely that was a tear glittering in his eye.

CHAPTER VIII.

JENNY SPILLETT COMPARES MATRIMONY TO A PIE.

During the next few weeks all was bustle and expectation in the quiet old manor house. Miss Doddingstead, who was the very last person in the whole establishment to hear of the coming event, was in that condition of anxious fussiness and obstruction not unfrequently to be observed in incapable women in a position of authority who cannot lead with success, and yet are too honestly anxious to do their duty to easily follow the leading of others, until the patient Mrs. Harrison was heard to

exclaim, "It would be a mercy if she would catch one of her bad colds and keep to her bed for a bit."

In due time the Colonel received a letter from his old friend the General, signed with a significantly bold and large "Peter," as the General was not the least ashamed of that good old name, so honoured in art and on the Continent. But the Colonel, with all his deference to the feelings of others in matters that did not touch him too closely, could never get over the strange prejudice against this name which still exists in a certain class of unenfranchised British minds, and for which Shakespeare is largely responsible when he seized its adaptibility to the mouth of a peevish old woman; so the Colonel felt himself a little snubbed, as "Sir P." certainly had a somewhat uncourteous and

tradesmanlike air he must allow, and the stout old warrior in question had before given him a hint that he disliked having his name slurred over by his friends as something to be ashamed of. The General would be delighted to come for such an interesting (and unusually lively, it may be added) occasion, and understanding the hint, and taking it good-naturedly and courageously, he promised to provide himself with a staff of young gentlemen, any one of whom might appear at her Majesty's dinner table. Lady Grandison and his daughter would also be delighted to accompany him. He professed to be highly interested in the invention of the new "lubricator" for his old friend the clock, which he had not in any way forgotten, and with a little return gossip about old friends that was not quite of such an

innocent nature as the Colonel's, and his cordial regards to his charming god-daughter, whom he expected to find had grown handsomer than ever, he ended his letter in the manner indicated.

The invitations to the ball had resulted in a much larger per centage of acceptances than usual, as it was early in the ball season. Nor did the matter end here; it soon became truly remarkable how many quite unexceptionable people wished, through mutual friends, to have the honour of being presented to the Colonel, and seeing his famous old house, until, on counting up heads with Harrison, he was quite bewildered at the magnitude of the invasion he had brought upon himself, and Harrison, in the privacy of the cabinet council in the housekeeper's room, was somewhat sarcastic about the Colonel's "select ball."

In the mean time Mary bravely did her best to interest herself in what was going on for her especial pleasure and honour. But to a girl of her deep feeling and sincere nature, without that hardy robustness which is mostly the privilege of a humbler class, a blight had fallen on her which might easily lead to serious consequences. For, after all, the one real deadly enemy to human happiness is a deep disappointment in any form; it may land us in a gloomy stagnation that will never be quickened again!

Spillett did her best to rally her young mistress and impress upon her that love was only like the measles or whooping cough that all young people had to go through, and the earlier it came the sooner you got over it—*that* didn't kill one! It was a bad husband that spoiled a woman's life

and her good looks worse than the small-pox. You never knew how a man would turn out till you were baked with him in the matrimonial pie; and as to vexing about a lover, you might as well vex about not being tied up in a sack that you could never get out of again. A lover lost was a happiness gained more often than twice, if women bit with marriage only knew what was good for them; it was just as often going into slavery and back to school again as not, when you couldn't even have a bonnet to please yourself, or hardly do a thing you would like to do without the Prayer-book thrown in your face wide open at the marriage service; and what are called the best of husbands are often the worst about letting a woman have her liberty, and if they were not good husbands, it was worse in another way.

Women came into the world to get married no doubt, but whether they did or whether they didn't, it was six of one and half a dozen of the other, unless they had the luck of the Old One,—but then, it was well known marriages were made in the other place.

But the eloquent discourses of this stern professor of love and matrimony did not make much impression on the love-sick maiden, whose young wits, sharpened by her own trouble, had quickly come to the conclusion that Jenny Spillett must have had a deep disappointment of her own, which however increased her affection for her, but weakened the confidence she had in her opinion on these matters.

Nor did the coming down from town of the eagerly gracious and voluble emissary of Madame de Gros to try on her ball dress

touch but slightly her feminine interest and vanity, and the sad eyes that seemed to be looking far into the distance in the large looking-glass before which she was taken, were little in harmony with the festive looking dress which completed the image there presented. Neither did the enthusiastic asides of mademoiselle, an old comrade of Spillett's—which were genuine for once—on the beauty and distinction of Mary's appearance, have much more than an irritating effect. "*He* would not see her, what did it matter?" She kept her lover's last letter in her pocket by day and under her pillow by night, and the King of Zanzibar, who had watched her take it out of her pocket, had adroitly snatched it from her hand, and was only made to give up his prize after it had been torn in several places.

Her gentleness and ill-concealed sadness, and her loving attention to her grandfather, heaped scorching coals of fire on the old man's head, and the great pipe fumed with mouldy tobacco until the room was thick with smoke at all times, and Harrison was much perplexed to find an antidote to a craving for tobacco amongst his little medicines to put into the Colonel's tea cup. He finally decided it might be a slight madness, and treated him accordingly. The Colonel reproached himself for his negligence and want of forethought in guarding such a priceless treasure, and discovered too late that the child had become a woman. Mary had indeed passed almost in a moment from girlhood into womanhood, and with the fine instincts of a high race she now realized at a bound many of the conditions that govern society and position, and the

necessity for self-preservation in the binding nature of family ties of those who stand aloft, and she found herself face to face with the hard unwritten law of the great world, which forbade her to give her hand where she most desired to bestow it. What dairy-maid, she thought, would be forced to renounce her lover because his father was not all that he should be? Although she had seen but little comparatively of Captain Wyldeman, yet she had had much opportunity of being alone with him, and their love had flamed up at once with the passionate instinct of lovers who are doomed to be crossed.

And so the gentle maid tried bravely to do her duty in that station of life to which God had called her; but so faithful and steadfast was her nature, she felt that if this could not be, her real happiness in life was

gone for ever. How the Colonel fought his battle with the invincible little god will be seen later; but it would have been better perhaps if he had not thrown such a resolute ally into the enemies' camp by his observation on Spillett's "unruly tongue," a stinging remark which hit truth in the centre, and the indictment being expressed in scriptural form had an additional gravity, with a suggestion of matrons and middle-aged women not at all agreeable to such a smart and lively young person.

At length the great day of the ball arrived, with astonishing rapidity to those chiefly concerned in the preparation. The "General and his lady" were to have the White Closets' room, a room he professed to be very fond of for reasons of his own—though her ladyship would have preferred something on less classic ground—as one of

the white closets, which opened only from the bedroom, made a very comfortable little den with a fireplace where the General, on his visits to Whitepatch, boldly lit up his cigar and trusted to Providence. Careful, however, were the warnings to his staff on this present occasion on the terrible crime of being detected in smoking anywhere on the premises but in the farmers' room, though he left them to suppose the crime would consist mainly in the detection.

The Don Quixote room was to be given to Captain the Hon. Richard Huntingcroft, only son of Lord Huntingcroft, and chief of the General's staff for the ball—a bold young gentleman of a free and open disposition, and a noted good fellow among his brother officers. The four other gentlemen brought by the General were distributed about the house in the rooms

generally given to bachelors. The Brambles of Merton, country neighbours, were to occupy the Oak room, and their two daughters the Green Chimney room adjoining, into which you entered by descending two steps, a quaint old room, with two fireplaces, one of which had a high carved mantelpiece painted green. Miss Grandison had the Rice-closet room opposite—why so called no one exactly knew—and into which you entered this time by mounting a step. The Bride's Chamber was reserved for the ladies to take off their things in when they arrived for the ball. At the bottom of the short flight of stairs that this room had all to itself was a narrow strong oak door, on the inside of which a heavy iron bar let down with a clang; for this or some other reason young ladies were always afraid to sleep there, although

it was the pleasantest bedroom in the house. The drawing-room was to be used as the ball room, according to ancient precedent, and when cleared out was a capital room for the purpose. This clearing out had been a matter requiring much adroitness on the part of Harrison, as the Colonel objected to anything being moved in the house if he could help it, and he had to be got out of the way by a strategic movement of Mr. Croucher, the agent, instigated by his friend Harrison; but even he dare not touch the old japanned cabinet, which remained on the night of the ball like a dangerous spot in the ice for the dancers, who were ever in fear of sending their elbows through the glass doors. The floor of this room was also a perplexity to Harrison, as Spillett, who had tried to spin round on it, declared they might as well

attempt to waltz gracefully on a barn-floor, so dry and gritty had it become. This Harrison overcame by sending for a man from Canterbury, who rubbed and scrubbed for two long days with a spirituous compound of wax and other matters. As a final result, it was found to be very satisfactory by the dancers, and highly creditable to ancient carpentry.

How cheerful are the preparations for an event of this kind in a country house! Even poor Mary gradually became interested in what was going on. The bustle and stir, the ringing of bells, the arrival of packages and parcels, the rushing of somebody who nearly knocks you down to find somebody else, the fragrant whiff of good things cooking in the far distance, the anticipation of what is coming, and the general animation and real happiness of

human beings busily intent in a match against time! Spillett, who had great good taste in these matters, assisted by Mary, who was not lacking either in this respect, had dressed the old hall and the principal rooms with flowers and evergreens, using the picture-frames and the old mirrors and other prominent objects to much advantage, for all was to be ready for the critical eye of the great General, who noticed everything, and with cordial appreciation when he could do so honestly.

Harrison, although the presiding genius that directed and thought of everything—giving even hints to Spillett and Mary in their decorations—did not neglect to give full attention to his own particular department, the supper table. He had hunted out all the fine old plate, of which the Manor was a complete store-house—quaint

old candelabras, high épergnes of many tempting stages, old hunting cups, deep silver baskets with delicate piercings, and solid old silver salvers, that in their plain simplicity looked veritable silver and their money's worth, free from the suspicion of modern ingenuity in making a show out of small weight; all these had been honestly polished up, having that mellow and varied brilliancy which old silver alone can have, and arranged with much skill and taste on the sideboards, and the two long tables in the large square dining-room. Harrison had great faith in a striking, general impression. A busy crowd was too much occupied with each other, and had little time, he thought, to appreciate detail, however good it might be; and he had twice marched Spillett in on his arm, imagining himself to be a

guest, to see how the room looked on entering, and the final result, with the abundance of glittering silver, the priceless old damask tablecloths, soft and rich, the bright reflecting glass, and other objects hereafter to be mentioned, all set out in this fine old panelled room, made a picture M. Meissoner himself would have delighted to paint, and those who know him well could hear at this moment his old lion-like roar of satisfaction as he came upon the scene.

At length the General's well-known cheery voice was heard at the hall door, and his genial presence and cordial manners seemed to add at once a new element to the house as he came in with that air of meaning to enjoy himself, and to make others do the same, which is at once catching and irresistible. He had what is called

a "fine presence," and was indeed a man of striking appearance, with a pleasant face and a look of fun and good nature, but with a sense of power and grip about him, that made men beware of taking too much advantage of it. His young friends were soon presented in due form, and Mary received her birthday congratulations and presents. The General brought her a lovely bouquet which had arrived from Solignac's at Cannes that very morning, and another bracelet which for a moment made the Colonel a little jealous, until Mary declared she should wear them both. The other presents were then duly admired and examined, and the whole party had tea served to them in the hall.

The "Hon. Dick," as Captain Huntingcroft was called by all who knew him well, was at once much taken with Mary, and she

with his amiable and open face, which looked as if the doing of kindnesses was the owner's natural occupation in life. But she little guessed at that moment, though she knew he was in the same regiment, that he was the intimate friend and confidant of her hero, and knew far more about a certain little affair than she could have dreamt was possible, having but little knowledge as yet of the sad indiscretion of young gentlemen deeply in love. So the Hon. Dick regarded her with much interest as she gave him his tea, though with a tinge of regret that he had not been first in the field to try and win such a charming and gentle creature for his wife, so unlike, as she seemed to him, the sample young lady of the great world.

The Brambles now arrived, with more presents and congratulations, and the two

young ladies, who were well dressed, well made, good looking and lively, added not a little to the party from the young gentleman point of view.

Lady Grandison was rather small and grim, and much what might be expected in a General's wife who had tramped a good deal about the world, with no greatly shining quality beyond that of an absolute belief in her General—an almost sure sign of a happy and prosperous old couple—but with plenty of that small information at first hand, of the earth's surface which is to be gained in a military life. Miss Grandison was a rather stout but excellent young woman of a certain medium young lady age, with cheery manners, whom every one liked, and with a look of her father's good-natured courage and fun.

The dinner was served in the Colonel's

room, which had been "dreadfully disturbed" for the occasion, and went off with a more cheerful amalgamation than is usual among the two sets of people, some of whom know each other very well, and the others are entire strangers, but with some of that haste which is inevitable under the consciousness of an unexpected immediate invasion.

When the ladies had retired and coffee was served, the Colonel calmly produced a box of cigars, and with a short apology that "cigars did not suit him," gravely proceeded to light the big pipe. If the Archbishop of Canterbury on the throne of his cathedral had suddenly pulled a cigar out of his pocket and lighted it up before the assembled Dean and Chapter, the effect could have hardly been more startling, but more particularly on the General. He

had been taking all sorts of precautions to prevent himself smelling of a cigar hastily stolen just before dinner, and he now became so violently red in the face with suppressed emotion of some kind that he had to rush off to his dressing-room to find his pocket-handkerchief; but as he appeared not very long afterwards, with a box of his own particular brand under his arm, we must conclude, although he was still very red in the face with an odd look of internal struggling with something, that this sudden emotion, so dangerous to men of his age and habit, had passed without any ill effect. The young men, more than one of whom had hesitated about coming where tobacco was so strictly forbidden, were only too delighted, and rushed on the forbidden fruit until the room became such a reservoir of tobacco

smoke that the General even was scandalized as to the effect it might have on the rest of the house, and he had to give his old friend a hint as they left the room that windows were made to be opened, as the Colonel seemed to be perfectly unconscious that any one else in the world had a nose for tobacco but himself.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WHITEPATCH BALL.

It was a pleasant sight to see the fine-looking old Colonel in his old-fashioned clothes, with Mary and Miss Doddingstead a little in the rear, receiving his guests at the drawing-room door, his dignified cordiality to old friends and his stately courtesy and kindliness to strangers.

The General had been consulted about the music, and the matter having been finally left in his hands altogether, he had engaged a fiery little Frenchman originally from Povence, fast becoming known for his quadrille band and his eccentricity of

character. The large centre window of the drawing-room had been taken out and a wooden construction made for the musicians, which was, however, somewhat smaller than it ought to have been for the number who arrived.

The ball was opened by Mary and her grandfather, with Lady Grandison and Mr. Bramble *vis-à-vis*, the General and Mrs. Bramble and Captain Huntingcroft and Miss Doddingstead as side couples, to the music of a sparkling French quadrille, with such right dance quality and spirit in the execution, that it set the keynote to the whole evening, showing Sir Peter's good judgment and right understanding of a ball in the country, which is generally a ball, and not a tempting bait to gather a brilliant crowd. And it may be observed by any one for themselves that the

world is much more honest when it gets down into the country and is frankly willing to enjoy itself if it can only get the chance.

Mary looked remarkably well in a ball room, with her good figure and air of distinction, and her sweet pale face and rich dark eyes, which had a brilliancy under the novel excitement of the occasion that hid the sadness which lay beneath. Her dress was pronounced to be the newest and prettiest in the room, as Madame de Gros, licensed bully and robber as she was, was nevertheless a really great artist when she chose to take the trouble, and Spillett had taken care there should be no negligence on this occasion. It was nevertheless a wonder to some of the good ladies present how a girl so buried in the country had managed to dress herself so well, and

as Spillett, with intention, had persuaded her to wear a single red flower in her hair, her striking resemblance to the famous picture on the staircase was quickly remarked by her country neighbours, and formed an interesting topic of mysterious conversation to strangers. Some of the young ladies began to feel a delightful thrill when they looked at her, and wanted to be taken between the dances by their partners to see the picture itself.

Now came a waltz, that breathed love, beauty, and youthful happiness in alternate strains of spirit and tenderness, harp, cornet, and violins rising and falling in changeful domination mingled with the surging sweetness of rich stringed instruments. Mary, borne in the arms of Captain Huntingcroft, forgot for the moment her sorrow in the joy of youthful pleasure and existence.

The Colonel had asked Sir Peter to be master of the ceremonies, placing everything in his hands with the one proviso that there should be no polkas, a dance he considered "little better than a jig at a fair, and fit only for romping maidservants and children;" and the gay old General entered with all his heart into his new duties. Not only did he set a good example himself, by showing that "no gallant gentleman should be taking his ease in a chair so long as there was a woman in the room who wished to dance," but he impressed on the Colonel also that he should join in the quieter round dances. For the General was very clear in his notions of the justice and equity of an all-round character being given to a country ball, so that every one should have a chance of a little lively movement if they pleased to inspiriting

music—not being at all disposed to yield to the easy fashion of the day of allowing the youngsters to have it all their own way. So he ruthlessly cut out some of the waltzes, and substituted quadrilles and lancers in their place, as, in the programme drawn up by a committee of the young people after tea, there was one quadrille and one set of lancers, and Mary, knowing the Colonel's objection to polkas, all the rest were waltzes. The final result however of this audacious assertion of elderly authority was a great general cheerfulness and movement, the old Rector even, with his rheumatism, standing up several times to complete a set, and country neighbours who had scarcely exchanged a word or a visit for years becoming friends again in a moment over a lively word or two exchanged in a dance. The elders declared

they had never seen such a ball since they were young, and the young people, notwithstanding the encroachment on their rights, declared they had no idea a ghostly ball could be so delightful; and the great General, who, popular man as he was, could make men tremble on befitting occasions, was actually to be seen after supper taking Mary round in a waltz. Their style of dancing did not agree, but she found that after all she preferred him as a partner to the lazy indifference and conventionality of some of the younger men, whom she soon discovered also had nearly all the same thing to say to her.

The "Hon. Dick," however, had taken care this time to be early in the field, and had secured a very good share of dances with Mary. This young person—for it may be taken for certain that the most

honest woman will try to ride us with a bunch of greens if we do not go of our own will the road she wishes—soon led him to talk a great deal more about her lover than he had intended, having made up his mind before he came that the right and safe thing to do under the circumstances was to avoid the matter altogether.

Mary's beauty and sweetness, however, soon turned him into a warm partisan, and as it was not very difficult to discover that she was as deeply in love as his friend, he formed the sudden resolution to help them if he could. Having one of those natures which must either lock themselves up entirely or open out completely, his reserve once broken, he poured into Mary's delighted ears everything he knew about his friend, praising him with manly generosity—that he was an excellent fellow whom every one

liked and respected, and a marked contrast (taking after his mother) to the rest of the family, who were the sort of people who did not much care what they did, provided they got their pleasure and amusement (how Mary wished the Colonel could have heard); and these two young people seemed so immensely taken up with each other, that the wiseacres quickly decided the Colonel was going to succeed in his object at one stroke.

At twelve o'clock the General gave the signal for supper, but he would have no dancing during that time—"there being a time for all things." He had Monsieur de l'Orchestre and his excellent band released from their wooden enclosure, and sent off to get their own supper. Neither did he intend the ball should in any way fail from the doubtful reputation of an early finish.

The supper, it need hardly be said, was excellent; but it was more than that, presenting a most inviting picture of old-fashioned hospitality and charm that was new to most of the guests, free from the eternal to-be-taken-for-granted look of most ball suppers, which are apt to resemble each other as closely as the windows of two confectioners' shops. There were good home-made dishes of many kinds that did not look as if they were manufactured by the hundred, and of which one has seen any number of the same exact thing before, but having a pleasant individuality that invited a trial—many so old-fashioned, they were taken for the latest novelties, to be made note of. Then there were the great game pies—for which Whitepatch has been famous since the days when people drank beer for breakfast—delicately flavoured by

a peculiar kind of sage brought to the Manor by a priest from Belgium, and still carefully grown in a corner of the old kitchen garden, and in the making of which Mrs. Harrison was a skilful interpreter of traditions and recipes. These were served up in deep old dishes with many flutings, that came to the Manor when or from whence no one knew—with the exception of the dish for the small-bird pie, a *chef-d'œuvre* of old Rouen ware with an inner dish for baking—all of them invitingly suggestive of the run that would be made on them and the necessity of coming early.

The dancing had commenced at nine o'clock, and every one felt hungry and cheerful at the sight of such good fare so refreshingly set forth.

The General had decided that a good liberal half hour or forty minutes would be

about the right time to allow for all contracting parties. As Mary and the Hon. Dick had presided at the small-bird pie, having friends at court, he and the younger and prettier Miss Bramble, his partner, had obtained quite (and more) than their share of that capital and much-contended-for dish. As time wore on, the General thought he would steal out and see if the band had returned before he gave the signal for recommencing. On finding no one in the drawing-room, he returned to the hall, and capturing a footman, sent him to recall Monsieur de l'Orchestre to his duties. He was then seized with a violent desire for a breath of fresh air and a cigarette, and forgetting altogether the pretty Miss Bramble, he tried to open the hall door, but the strange old fastenings defied all his efforts to undo them. In the mean time

the servant came running back into the hall, and seeing the General, exclaimed, "that the French gentleman sent back word that he 'didn't mean to play any more.'"

"Not play any more!" said the General. "What do you mean? You didn't understand him, very likely?"

"Yes, Sir Peter, I quite understood him; he spoke quite plain enough English, and said that he was not going to play any more."

Up rose the wrath of a British general at this act of mutiny.

"Where is he? he said.

"He's in the servants' hall, Sir Peter."

"Show me the way!" And the General marched off for the servants' hall. On arriving there he found Monsieur had been conducted to the farmers' room to smoke a cigar.

"Show me the way!" again cried the General; and he was led through a door into a long passage dimly lighted.

"Where is it?" he again said.

"The last door on the left, Sir Peter—down at the bottom."

"Very well; that will do. I can find it myself." And the servant retired, making way for him to pass.

Now, what the General took for the last door on the left was not, strictly speaking, a door at all, but simply a doorway that went down a few steps into a long underground passage which led to the old dairy.

The General went down the steps, but all was darkness. "Confound this old barrack! where the devil is it?" he said; but remembering the Colonel's former strict notions about tobacco, he thought the famous farmers' room he had so often heard of

was very likely "down here somewhere," though he had never seen it. Pulling out his little box of wax matches, he lighted one. Instantly, the whole place was ablaze as if with a thousand lights, and he saw advancing slowly towards him a tall powerful, figure with a dark evil face and a deep scar in the forehead that reached to the eyebrow. It was dressed in an antique naval uniform, with a broad leather belt round its body and with a sword by its side. The General turned as cold as ice, and could move neither hand nor foot. The figure passed him slowly in the narrow passage, and the only thing he was then conscious of was a sudden darkness. How long he remained in this state he could not tell, but he at last gained power over his limbs and sprang up the steps again into the passage above. "Pooh, pooh!" he

said, "I have had too much of that good champagne; it's the chill of that infernal dungeon! I am an old ass to be exciting myself like this over a ball! But I must find that damned little Frenchman!"

At this moment a door opened close to him, and Monsieur de l'Orchestre, with a long Italian straw cigar smouldering in his hand, showed himself in the opening. He had such a gloomy look of unutterable injury and woe that it was quite touching, and the General suppresed his wrath for a moment to hear what could possibly have happened.

Monsieur had been grossly insulted, he had been sent to have both his dinner and supper in the hall of the domestics, to sit down with his subordinates, and to be treated with familiarity by the crowd of common servants; he had not had even

one modest glass of wine offered him; "rien! rien de tout!" but that "execrable" servants' "bierre." Nor was this all, no refreshments had been sent during the evening, "rien! rien!" shut up as they were in that "étroit enfer," where there was no means of escape without a breach of the conventionalities. (Here Harrison's supervision had broken down—if it had only been now the Canterbury band!)

The General's military habits immediately sympathized with this degradation of rank, and he felt that Monsieur had cause for his provocation if not for his act of mutiny; but when he reflected how well he had done his duty until the irritable artist-nature had got the upper hand, he condoned that also. Then the crisis would allow no time for a long battle of words and the exercise of his proper authority,

and Monsieur was after all a distinguished artist, with some real genius in his own line. So, with much tact he praised the excellence of his band, and enlarged on the insular stupidity of English servants. Then, requesting Monsieur to favour him with a light for his cigarette, a tall portly figure and a little wiry one were soon to be seen marching up the dim passage arm-in-arm, with their lighted cigar and cigarette, the little figure exclaiming with much gesticulation, "Monsieur le Général, je vous assure ce n'est pas l'argent! ce n'est pas l'argent!" To which a hearty voice replied, "Cher mâitre, je vous croix, je vous croix de tout mon cœur!"

The General marched his little friend, still arm-in-arm, up to the door of the servants' hall in sight of his band and the assembled domestics and outsiders.

Then, after many bows, flourishes, and expressions in which the word "honour" held a prominent place, he found himself once more in the dining-room where, indeed, not only a glass but a large tumbler of the "Colonel's champagne" was drunk with great satisfaction and benefit.

Sir Peter's next care was to get hold of the Colonel, and Harrison was ordered in a peremptory manner to immediately take a good supply of champagne into the wooden box, and the guests soon began to return to the ball room.

The *amour-propre* of the excitable little artist being now appeased, and the *étroit enfer* being magically cooled and enlarged by the entrance of a very liberal supply of fine champagne, he set to work again with enthusiasm and good will, repeating to himself, as he led his band, in a low

voice, "Il n'y a personne comme un vrai getilhomme anglais," producing some of his choicest "morsels," penetrating and tender rhythmical waltzes that would change the heart (after supper) of the most club-depraved bachelor (one of them his own composition, which the General called for a second time), quadrilles, lancers, gallops, aud mazurkas—the latter introduced as extras on his own responsibility—all led with such fire and spirit, such dreamy sweetness in the tender passages, such well-balanced light and shade, pause, and enlivening quickness at the right moment, and succeeding each other with such rapidity, that the spirit of the dance which is so deeply interwoven in human nature was stirred as nature intends, and no one in the room hardly could sit still with such "splendid music" sounding in their ears.

The really fine champagne had its effects also—prince of wines for sluggish English nerves—so soft and pure it could harm no one, scarcely even intoxicate, drank in reasonable moderation, yet with an agreeable life-lifting power, that did its work with the simplicity of excellence; and even the ladies drank well of it without fear, when assured of its sinless character by their appreciative and responsible partners.

Then, as the evening wore on, the clear and fragrant chicken broth, the sassafras jellies—a delicate and sustaining compound for the ladies, found to be more refreshing than the ices—another traditional confection at the Manor unearthed by Harrison, and, still later on, the fine Russian tea, served in little gems of real old willow pattern, which all felt bound to taste, for had it not been a brilliant idea of the

Colonel's, who remembered its good effect in the small hours at a ball in Paris in his younger days, and for which he had sent expressly to that capital, paying for it a fabulous price; this proved so refreshing, and the cups so small, that more had to be sent for, and the Colonel was delighted until at length human nature gave in, and the ball broke up.

When the Colonel retired to bed after a smoke with the gentlemen in his room, great was his astonishment to hear his old friend Don Carlos over his head gravely reminding him that it was five o'clock in the morning!

Lady Grandison, on awaking some hours afterwards, found her good old comrade, with whom she had shared many a strange bed, turned from her in deep sleep—but it was the sleep that never waketh!

CHAPTER X.

"MISFORTUNES NEVER COME ALONE," AND THE STORY CREEPS UP THE INEVITABLE HILL OF TRUE LIFE.

THE Colonel had returned from the General's funeral, which was a very crowded affair—his death causing deep regret. Monsieur de l'Orchestre had come down expressly from town for it, uninvited, after the excellent custom of his country, and shed an honest tear over this "perfait gentilhomme anglais." The Colonel blamed himself for having killed his old friend by allowing him to overtax his strength at the ball. But, if he was guilty in any

way, it was the great pipe was the real culprit. He was engaged in slowly composing an appropriate letter on slight mourning paper to the widow, offering to place at her disposal, rent free, a pleasant little old house and garden on his property, "which sadly wanted some one to save it from going to ruin," should she have not found anything else that would suit her better, and should the "recent unhappy circumstance not prove an insuperable obstacle to the neighbourhood;" for the General was not rich, and his widow would now have only moderate means at her command—when Harrison came to the door to say his wife would be glad of the parchments for the apricot preserve. This was a great affair at the Manor, for which Mrs. Harrison and a certain old wall in the kitchen garden

were justly famed; many pots of this preserve being yearly sent to the neighbours around.

"Oh!" said the Colonel, putting down his pen. He had sorted out some worthless old leases and deeds, the blank sheets of which were used by Mrs. Harrison for export business and the others for home use—as she was a finished artist of delicate sense and greatly disliked covering her conserves with those "nasty new things" which, in her opinion, always left a taste and a smell; and, besides, real old parchment covers, thick and solid, gave a veritable stamp of "good home made" not to be obtained from the grocers. The Colonel quite appreciated this nicety, and he begrimed himself with dust rumaging once a year on her behalf; but he had left the old deeds he had selected for her in the

library. Being deep in the composition of his letter he hesitated a moment, then unlocked a drawer and gave Harrison the key of the sacred room.

"You will find them heaped up in the big chair by the window; but go yourself, Harrison," he said, having a great objection to women entering the library for various reasons—one being that he was immediately tormented to have it cleaned and set to rights; other and deeper ones the reader is already acquainted with. But Harrison was not free from the ordinary servant's inability to obey to the letter precise orders—and regarding his wife as himself, he let her go in his stead.

During Mrs. Harrison's absence, the news arrived that Sarah was going to be married immediately. This interesting event. following the circumstances already

described, set so many tongues going, and caused such a stoppage in public business, that Mrs. Harrison's absence was not remarked for some time, until at length she was "wanted," and nowhere to be found. Harrison became a little uneasy, and on going to the library to see if she was still there, wondering if she had succumbed to her irresistible desire to "put things to rights," he discovered her on the ground just inside the door in a dying and speechless condition. She never rallied or spoke again, and within a week was buried in a sunny corner of the old churchyard, selected by herself only the summer before as "the place she would like to lie in."

What she had seen, or if she had seen anything at all but the heap of old deeds in the lap of the armchair, no one ever

knew. Was the Colonel again guilty of unintentional manslaughter? Before he is convicted, however, it must in fairness be stated that Mrs. Harrison had greatly overexerted herself at the time of the ball; and some of the other servants had observed her to "be not herself" ever since.

Meanwhile, Mary had been somewhat diverted from her own misfortune by these tragic events; but the wound remained, as with most unchanging natures, she was a little wanting also in that elasticity which readily rebounds from a sudden overthrowing. Perhaps her love of fun might have been a help to her, but she had nothing to call it out. She had no young companions excepting Spillett, and the events of the Manor were too familiar, or too sacred, to be laughed at by her—

though, indeed, the comic element was not entirely wanting. The house, which only a short time before no one was allowed to profane with the faintest odour of tobacco, now reeked of it; as the Colonel smoked incessantly and wherever he might happen to be, in spite of the significant sniffs of his daughter. The great lubricator, so perfect in theory, was found to be sticky and clogging in practice, and one morning the gravity of the good Rector was sorely tried by hearing Don Carlos strike three in the middle of his sermon, with the Colonel sitting in front of him. But an unexpected event now arrived, which brought a little new hope and diversion to Mary. The Hon. Dick had come down to pay a visit in the neighbourhood, to the fresh pricking up of country gossip, which had already been much stirred by recent

events at Whitepatch. There could be only one reason for his escaping from regimental duties and coming down *there*. This being settled with absolute certainty, no other would be accepted for a moment. A fixed idea in a dull country district, where any new food for gossip is readily grasped, but not so readily given up, is not easily routed, even by positive proof to the contrary, and Mary Doddingstead was as certainly the future Lady Huntingcroft, in the minds of her neighbours, as if they had all seen her married in Whitepatch church. Nor did the good people allow themselves to be in any way thrown off the scent by the announcement of the Hon. Dick's friends, that he had come down solely to take a small hunting-box for the season, called the Little Sack, it being an easy distance from town for him to run

backwards and forwards. Indeed, some thought the engagement had already taken place, and that they should see Miss Mary putting a little colour into her cheeks by riding to hounds with her "future intended." But Mary, with the intuitive perception of the sensitive and tender-hearted, divined at once that a party of rescue had appeared in the distance. In fact, the Hon. Dick—who was rather apt to get his fingers burnt by an excess of friendliness of disposition—moved by the despair and distress of his comrade, and to say the truth, not a little bored by having to listen to the one eternal subject, had had the happy idea of both effecting an escape and uniting business and pleasure in an effort to help him. As he had been received with special favour and distinction by the Colonel—both on account of his

former friendship with Dick's father and his own personal merits, and because also of the high opinion entertained of him by the General—he felt that over-confidence which the ready throwing open of the gates of friendship is apt to raise in sanguine natures without very ready perceptions.

Captain Huntingcroft came over at once to call at Whitepatch, and was cordially received by the Colonel, who jumped to the same conclusion as his neighbours as to the object of his visit to these parts; and hoped all might yet end well, if Mary was not obstinate. Miss Mary, then, was soon to be seen at some of the meets, mounted on Queen Elizabeth, and accompanied by her grandfather, though without the predicted accession of colour in her face; and intercourse between the two young people became very frequent.

The Hon. Dick was not long in disclosing his intentions to Mary. His plan was to watch for an opportunity, and boldly demand her hand for his friend; trusting to the natural merits of the case to be enabled to fight it out with the Colonel. But Mary was of a different opinion, and persuaded him to say nothing until she herself gave the signal; and so exactly did they behave like a pair of undeclared lovers, that every one was on the tiptoe of expectation. Mary was not long in seeing the danger of this in the disappointment it would cause the Colonel; it was, however, such an extremely difficult thing for her to convey this to the Hon. Dick, who, as it has been said, was readier in action than in perception, that she decided to take the matter into her own hands, and make the Colonel understand that there

was not "anything of that kind" between them.

During this time another question of high political importance in our little world had been agitating the Manor-house —the appointment of a new housekeeper to replace Mrs. Harrison. The widower was for some time inconsolable, as his wife had been his right hand, working with him in perfect confidence and accord, and helping him to maintain the discipline and the contented good order of the household. Spillett, however, was remarkably good to him, ceasing her impertinences, and helping him in every possible way in the general management—so much so, that John, the head footman, who was desperately in love with her, became exceedingly jealous. Miss Doddingstead had a dim notion, instigated by Jenkins, that

she could improve matters in the household by breaking the Harrison-Spillett ministry, as the Colonel never interfered in household affairs—excepting to look at the bill of fare, or to raise a sudden storm if anything put him out of his usual habits—confining himself to the stables and gardens. Harrison's desire to instal a friend of his wife's, then available, was overruled, and Miss Doddingstead engaged a housekeeper recommended to her by Lady Gentlebird (a distant country neighbour) as a paragon of excellence, and quite remarkable "for her talent in keeping people in order." (She omitted to mention that she was parting with her because no other servant would remain under the same roof.)

We must now again return to our heroine. The Colonel was taking his

usual quarter-deck walk in the kitchen-garden, when Mary joined him. The poor child had not at this moment to fight another battle with him, but only the disagreeable task of letting down by the run the wide sails with which he was so happily skimming away on a false tack. He received her with such graciousness and kindness, and with such a cheerful face, that her courage nearly failed her.

"Well, my dear," he said, "and how are *you* getting on?"

"Oh, very well, grandpapa," she said, with an intonation that might mean anything. Taking hold of the two gloves which he held loosely in his left hand, she walked by his side.

This affectionate little sign he knew well meant something of importance, and the breeze freshened in the old man's sails.

"When are you going to have another ride?" he said.

"Captain Huntingcroft is coming over to luncheon to-morrow, grandpapa, and we might go back with him, if you like."

"Oh yes, I remember now. As you please, my dear. What a capital fellow he is!" said the Colonel enthusiastically. It would be impossible for any one not to like him."

"I like him extremely, too, grandpapa," said Mary, getting a little closer to him.

The Colonel thought he was going to hear the much-hoped-for news, though a shade of displeasure crossed his mind as he thought the young fellow ought to have come to him first. But young people, he reflected, are so different in these days, and he was glad of any port in a storm.

"But I don't want you to think—that

I—that is—that there is anything else, grandpapa," she said, a brilliant colour coming into her face.

The Colonel stopped short, and looking at her, thought what a handsome child it was, but he did not yet understand. "You mean that he has not spoken to you, my dear? That is quite proper, and I like him the better for it."

"No, dear grandpapa, it is not that either," she said, getting still closer to him, and hiding her face.

"I don't quite understand, my dear."

Then Mary had to declare that there was "nothing of that sort" between them, and that even if Captain Huntingcroft cared for her, which she was sure he did not—in that way—she could never care for him more than as a friend.

"Have you had a little quarrel, Mary?"

"No indeed, it is not that either! We are always great friends."

Then the Colonel understood that his hopes were crushed again for the present, and they walked on in silence; but there was the old twitching of his eyebrows, and the look of deep pain in his face. The gardener coming up soon to speak to him, Mary stole away, and ran into the house with tears on her cheeks, meeting Spillett on the stairs, who informed her that the new housekeeper had arrived, and that "they didn't like the look of her at all."

CHAPTER XI.

THE HOUSEKEEPER WHO "HAD SUCH A TALENT FOR KEEPING PEOPLE IN ORDER," AND THE NORTH TRAMPLES ON THE SOUTH.

Mrs. Walker was a large sturdy Yorkshire woman, with a big head, and a look about her that was suggestive of fight at the very first glance. She had a good knowledge of her business, no doubt, and in her early days had lived in several of the great families in her own county; and so impressed was she with the native superiority of this immaculate shire, that she was convinced any one born a mile beyond its borders could never be much

more than tolerable. She commenced business with great decision and promptitude; and the tea in the housekeeper's room was not over before she had made a mortal enemy of Spillett, whom, however, she completely underrated, and regarded only as "the young lady's maid." Harrison, who was quietly taking her measure, looked forward to much enlivenment of their often rather dull life by the inevitable little war which he scented between these two women —though in his own mind he was disposed to back Spillett. Jenkins, however, reported at head-quarters, that "Mrs. Spillett would be finely put into her proper place now."

At supper, the same evening, matters did not improve.

Now Harrison's name was a true Yorkshire one, though he came from Deal. His father had been a captain and small owner

of vessels, and his grandfather had been a pilot hailing from that port. He himself, though brought up as a seaman, had entered the Colonel's service by an accident connected with yachting; there he fell in love with his late wife, who was in service at the Manor, married her, and remained at Whitepatch.

Although he was very dark, with a little grey in his hair now, he was a fine, well-built man of the Yorkshire type, with a powerful chest, and the air of being able "to lift a church." He had also a peculiar way of speaking, which may be still observed in some of the natives on the east coast from Scarborough to Kent, which often reminds one of the north. Hence Mrs. Walker jumped to the conclusion that he must be a Yorkshireman also; and not being insensible to good looks in a man,

she was pugnaciously gracious to him, remarking that "he must be from Yorkshire too."

On his replying that he was a native of Deal, and never heard that his family had anything to do with the people in the north, she observed, with a patronizing air, "Oh, then he was only a southerner."

Harrison took his ground at once. "Yes, indeed, and he was glad to say he belonged to people who didn't think their betters dirt, like those radical, ill-mannered folks that came from the north."

"Radical and ill-mannered!" exclaimed the Yorkshirewoman. "They might be independent and know their own value—it was not unlikely—but they had a right to, as they were first in everything, in Yorkshire specially—every one knew that; they were a stronger and a finer folk than

any, and built all the railways, and ships, and docks, and made all the engines, and all the hams that were real hams, and all the clothes people wore, even out in Africa; and *they* had never been conquered slaves like the people in the south, who were soft as a sheep for the most part, and didn't know what a real hard day's work meant—ask any captain of a vessel—and the gentlefolks too, were real gentlefolks, and didn't mind what they spent in being neighbourly and such like, and would ruin themselves right out to prevent any of your meddling topsy-turns, who came down from a London paper, being elected to Parliament; and *they* didn't live upon growing hops and selling them high, when they were stale and rotten, to make bad beer for the low London publics; and the places they lived in were mostly

real castles, something like for gentlefolks to live in, and not ramshackle make-believes that was nothing but doors and draughts and queer outsides, as there was in some parts."

There being a certain modicum of truth in the statements of this terrible patriot, only dimly understood by the audience, it was highly offensive and irritating both to Harrison and Spillett. The former with difficulty restrained himself from speaking, though curious to see how far she would run, and he was just going to reply angrily, "It was wonderful that, if they had such a fine country up there, they should run away from it in such crowds to find places in the south!" when a bright glance from Spillett arrested him, as this astute young person had quickly decided it would never do to fight this woman

with her own clumsy weapons. She must be got rid of in another way. Harrison reflected a moment that shindies meant bad government, and that he intended still to be master, so he replied quietly, "it was a pity she had ever left it,"—which remark, touching some deep sores in Mrs. Walker's career, silenced her more effectually than he expected, and she paused to reflect on the ill-treatment she had received from those who ought to have known better. When the conversation was again renewed, it was remarkable to see the air of a great lady which Spillett suddenly assumed, addressing her as "Mrs. Walker" in that tone of cold dignity which a duchess could not have better assumed in checking presumption and familiarity, and which had a moderating effect on this "superior person" in spite of herself.

But Jenkins again reported at head-quarters that "Mr. Harrison and Mrs. Spillett had been nicely silenced at supper-time;" and head-quarters plumed itself on its wisdom.

When Mary and the Hon. Dick again met, they held secret counsel as usual, but Mary enjoined great caution, as she feared her grandfather's observation would be now more keenly alive to what was passing. Their intercourse, however, remained much as before. This rash young gentleman, however, began to find that such close intercourse with Mary was becoming dangerous to his own peace of mind, and even to his honour as a friend; and at one moment he became impatient to terminate his visit, though at the next it gave him pain to think of going away. But as Mary was certain that nothing

could be done until the Colonel had a little recovered from his disappointment, she still held her friend back.

Spillett stuck to her opinion that her only chance was to run away, and, "besides, it was the regular thing. Heiresses who had any spirit always did run away when the front door was slammed in their lover's faces. Pedigrees were full of it, if one did but know, though nothing was said about it in the making." And so the time passed in hopes and fears and long desperate letters (the Hon. Dick only read a quarter of them), which arrived by nearly every post at the Little Sack. It did not hurt Mary's conscience to hear at second hand some of their contents, though she would send nothing in return beyond what the Hon. Dick could convey from his own observation—which she considered might

be quite sufficient, if he had his eyes open.

It was not long before the ghosts became a frequent subject of conversation in the housekeeper's room, which even Harrison, though it brought him sad reflections, did not try to check as usual. Jenkins was much engaged with her mistress at this time, as she had at last caught "her bad cold," of which the moral symptom was a small tyranny, unknown at other times, and she would hardly be left alone for a moment. Spillett did not fail to seize the occasion of such an open field. She suddenly developed quite a fine melodramatic invention in her descriptions of the apparitions that haunted the house, heroically overcoming her own fears in this moment of state danger. The maiden of the eastern stairs "altered the character

of your blood, so that it was never the same again," by the terrible look of her dark eyes. And Mrs. Walker was caught staring at the picture on the stairs with an almost bumpkin expression of awe. Then the giant figure of the murdered naval captain, who came out of the undiscovered passage into the old dairy—a place that had known centuries of wickedness—had now "his huge cutlass drawn in his right hand, dripping with shining great drops of red blood that became sparks of fire when they touched the ground, and a ghastly wound reached from the top of his head down to his right eye—which had gone; and after he had frozen you into a statue, when you could no more move than if you were screwed up in a coffin, he paced backwards and forwards near you like a sailor on the deck of a ship."

When Harrison's back was turned, Spillett gave Mrs. Walker a low whispered account, in friendly confidence, of the sad fate of his wife, and the evil spirit of the old squire, who shot his only son, and who was let loose a short time every day at dusk from the wicked place, and who "had power to close the door behind you as soon as you entered the library, so that it couldn't be opened again, and then to make you fall to the ground speechless." The garden ghost (a doubtful tradition among the servants only) was now a spectral figure "nearly as tall as two men, that came out of the garden and passed through the kitchen court just before bedtime." All of which had such an effect on the unfortunate woman, that she returned to the burden of her old song as she put herself to bed—"There was no peace anywhere in this wicked world."

There was certainly no peace amongst the household at the Manor. Nothing was done as it ought to be in a real gentleman's house. Things were very different in the houses Mrs. Walker had been accustomed to. No under servant was to be down a minute later than half-past five in the morning—in Yorkshire, in the great houses, they had often to begin at five; the dirt in the old offices was enough to breed a pestilence; and the house itself was no cleaner than a lodging at Scarborough! Did they want to sit the whole day over their meals, giggling about their lovers and talking small at their betters? The men had no business in the kitchen at all, except to fetch and carry, instead of stopping about to make sheep's eyes at the maids over a dish cover. No one knew their own proper work, and they did

nothing but scrimmage about after one another, like a school-treat broke lose at a railway junction. All of which was largely in the good woman's own imagination; for, although the offices were very old, no doubt, and things had got a little lax and out of joint since Mrs. Harrison's death, the house was neither dirty nor in any way disorderly for a happy family of old servants who helped each other pleasantly for the sake of the chat, and had never been accustomed to be drilled like a regiment of soldiers. But, then, if we happen to know ourselves to be superior, we must make our superiority to be felt on our own ground; and such a rebellion arose among the under servants, who declared they "were treated like dirt," and would all give warning, that Harrison and Spillett had some difficulty in quieting them

without disclosing their own plans; for Jenkins and Mrs. Walker had become as thick as the proverbial thieves, and they saw that the least imprudence on their parts would throw the power into the Jenkins faction and probably ensure their own downfall. There was also a fear lest this danger might extend to Spillett's father in the stables; for Harrison knew that if he went to the Colonel and laid matters before him, he was extremely likely to take his daughter's part, however much he might think her in the wrong; and Mr. Spillett, who had a spirit of his own, was sure to take the part of his Jenny.

At length it was decided that the Hon. Dick should make his grand attempt on the Colonel, and Mary took a leaf from her maid's book and advised a ride as the easiest moment to bring the matter for-

ward naturally. So the Colonel was again artfully trotted out on his old hunter for diplomatic purposes. The Hon. Dick had had such cautions instilled into him by Mary, that he hardly knew how to begin; but he felt the greatest circumspection must be used, and as little appearance of opposition as possible; so he assumed the tone of a young officer to his colonel, when he has some particular favour to ask.

"I am afraid I shall have to be a good deal in town just now, sir," he said. "I shall not see you again for some time. I am in hot water as it is with the Colonel."

"I am sorry to hear that; but you know whenever you can run down again we shall be here."

"You are very kind, sir. I have enjoyed coming over to Whitepatch immensely; but as I shall not see you again for some

time, there is a matter I have on my conscience I should like to speak to you about, if you will allow me."

The Colonel began to wonder if he was going to propose for Mary after all. "Oh, certainly," he said.

"Of course I only wish to mention it to you, and not to interfere with your own judgment in any way, and I feel how little right I have to say anything at all; but you have been so awfully kind to me—and I am sure you won't think it is anything like interference, Colonel Doddingstead, or anything of that sort."

The Colonel knew that the Hon. Dick and Captain Wyldeman were quartered together, and had several times reflected on this odd coincidence, and a suspicion of what was coming crossed his mind.

"Well?" he said rather shortly.

The enterprising guardsman tightened his reins.

"My friend, Frank Wyldeman, has told me of his unfortunate attachment to your granddaughter, and as he is a thundering good fellow, and not at all like his father or the rest of his family, as you, sir, perhaps think, I rashly promised to intercede for him if I could. But, of course, it is no business of mine, really, and if you think I am wrong I am very sorry indeed; but he is a fellow I would do anything in the world for!"

"Captain Huntingcroft, I regret deeply to say this match can never be with my consent. It is quite impossible that I can ever allow my granddaughter to enter that family."

"But don't you think it's deuced hard, sir, for a fellow to be swamped by his

relations in a matter like this? If you could only inform yourself in the right quarters, you'd find there is not a better fellow living in any way! Everybody likes and respects him, and he is considered one of the best officers we have had for some time, and he will distinguish himself certainly if he has a chance."

"All that I do not deny," said the Colonel. "He may be what you say, for anything I know to the contrary; but my prejudice—if you like to call it so—against his father is invincible."

"But are you sure, Colonel Doddingstead, that your granddaughter's happiness is not deeply involved also? Neither is it very fair on Wyldeman, I think, that they should have been allowed to see so much of each other; and, I assure you, he is deeply attached to her, and has been quite a

different man ever since they met in Gloucestershire."

"I acknowledge," said the Colonel, "that there was some remissness on my part in the matter; but I entrusted her implicitly to Lady Worthingham, whom I have known half my life, and knew nothing of what was going on until my granddaughter's return. Because I have made one error you cannot, I hope, endeavour to persuade me that I am to make a worse one."

"But, Colonel Doddingstead, would it be a worse one?"

"My mind is quite made up, sir!" said the Colonel, getting hot at last, "and I must beg that you will not let me hear you allude to the subject again." And he trotted on, as he had formerly done with Mary.

The two men, however, parted at last

with sufficient cordiality; as the Colonel had great regard for the Hon. Dick, and liked a courageous opponent—particularly when he had been beaten, and he sighed as he rode off at the turning, to think what a pity it was he could not have pleaded for himself.

But the Hon. Dick—who did not like to get his fingers burnt, even though he thrust them into the fire with his eyes open—as he trotted off on his own road, most disrespectfully declared "he had never seen such an obstinate, hot-headed old turkey-cock since he was born, and that it would serve him right if they ran away together to-morrow!"

Captain Huntingcroft departed early the next morning for town, but Mary, during the day, received a packet of books he had promised to lend her; and inside the

parcel was a letter. The Colonel had given no sign of what had happened during his ride. He had merely remarked that "our young friend is going to town again to-morrow," and Mary passed a restless night in wondering what had really taken place. The letter in the parcel was as follows :—

"The Little Sack, Tuesday Evening.

"My dear Miss Doddingstead,

"I could do *nothing* with your grandfather to-day. I think I tried my best, but he is dreadfully obstinate, and I am afraid I made him rather angry. I know what I should do if I were Wyldeman. I should come at once with a beautiful coach and six horses, in the dead of the night, and steal you away, whether you said yes or no, and then you would be obliged to marry me you know! *I* should not wait very long.

It is a great shame—that is all I can say—after you have been allowed to come together like that. But you must not lose courage. I am more determined now than ever it *shall be*, sooner or later, and it will be very hard if we cannot get the better of the Colonel's obstinacy between us. But you must remember that Love is the King in this world after all, and you must obey him first, and not care too much about what others say or think. You are much too good and nice ever to do anything really wrong, if you tried ever so hard! So don't be thinking yourself dreadfully wicked because you want to do like the young birds; they are not wicked when they fly off with some fine young cock who has been singing to them with all his heart. I hate all these conventionalities and chopping up one's happiness for the sake of

prejudice and position and putting one's relations into the scale first. Who was that fellow who said something about red tape? Well, now, we are just like that! People of our class are all tied up with red tape, and stuck into a place where we must remain.

"I expect to find it dreadfully dull in town now. You will send me a line, I know, to cheer me up a little, and let me know how you are and how matters are getting on. It is quite correct, you know, to write to a slow old fellow like me!—every one does. I will send you down those other books I promised you about art, I have got them somewhere up there. I recommend you to study Hammerton; they say he has the genius of good sense. But I am rather particular about my books, so *please open the parcel yourself.*

"You will be dreadfully bored, I fear, with this long letter, but you must put your foot down with the Colonel you know, and not give way an inch. After all, he is much too fond of you to tread on you very hard I think—he would be a very odd sort of man who could have the heart to do that with you. I should go on telling him that you are quite determined never to marry any one else, about once a week, until he gets jolly well tired of saying no.

"Good-bye. I am off early to-morrow, and very sorry not to have seen you again.

"Ever your sincere Friend,

"Richard Huntingcroft.

"I shall give your love to F. W."

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROBBERY AND MURDER OF MR. GREGO.

Her majesty, the Queen of Sheba, after this, had a slight indisposition, and her ladies in waiting, with some anxiety and flutter, were attending upon her in the garden. Mary's sitting-room was thus left in possession of the King of Zanzibar and Mr. Grego.

These captives together in a shivering land were said to be both natives of that delightfully warm little island of Zanzibar, which is the supposed paradise of monkeys and parrots. But the usual sympathy and good feeling bred by a similarity of misfor-

tune was sadly wanting in this case, and their natural prejudices and propensities were also kept alive by the injudicious distribution of the good things of this life from the hands of Mary and Spillett; for although his Majesty of Zanzibar was no doubt the more rapacious and self-seeking of the two, he was yet treated with much injustice by Spillett when Mary was not present. The king, though small, was a powerful little animal, with great nervous force and surprising agility even for a monkey. He did not belong to a common race, having much delicacy and harmony in his proportions, with almost the face of a handsome negro, and a certain look of dignity in repose which was sufficiently comical, and had suggested his name to Mary when she had heard whence he came. He had belonged to a performing troop of monkeys from

Antwerp which had found its way to Deal, and he had been secured, after much trouble and at a large price, by Harrison for his young mistress. The king was a most intelligent and amusing little fellow, rarely spiteful or unamiable to Mary, though Spillett had always to beware of him. He would dance a polka round the room in very fair time to Mary's playing, holding out his arms to an imaginary partner, and constantly glancing over his shoulder to know when he was to stop and receive his reward; he would throw two large nuts in the air in imitation of a juggler until he got the signal to eat them, and would march across the room at a solemn pace with a white pocket-handkerchief pinned round his shoulders and a lighted candle in his hand—which latter performance generally ended in his trying to eat the candle.

Mr. Grego was also a distinguished and valuable specimen of his race—for whom Mary had given another large price—as her grandfather never refused her any money she wanted. He had a fine head and wide forehead, a plump silver-grey body, and a beautiful red tail in unusually flourishing condition, that was Mary's delight. He also had a certain dignity of his own as he sat on his perch, apparently indifferent to all that was passing around him, with his head slightly on one side, in silent contemplation. He was a true Zanzibar parrot, and no one knew his exact age, but it was pronounced by the proper authorities to be enormous. He had a solid gold ring with an eyelet on his right leg, with "Mr. Grego, 1792, W.T." engraved upon it. This might have belonged to another parrot no doubt; but

as his vocabulary contained certain nautical terms connected with the manœuvring of sails on board ship, that had gone out of general use before the end of the last century, there was good reason to believe that he was even much older than the date on the ring. Yet he did not show his age, except in his witch-like claws and the look of his eyes—which were uncommonly like an old wizard's. He had evidently lived much on board ship, and spoke several languages, and some of his expressions were so strange, it would perhaps have been as well if he had passed an examination before he was sent to the young lady of Whitepatch Manor.

Mary, on hearing that morning of the illness of the goat from Spillett, had hurried down to the garden, and left her to feed the monkey and parrot. Spillett

had followed her quickly, leaving the unfortunate king shut up in his house without any breakfast, or a single nut of consolation. His house, which was built by Mary herself, who was an excellent little carpenter (Spillett found that carpentering and sticky glue-pots spoilt her hands for fine work), was on a small table on a level with Mr. Grego's cage, and only a few yards distant. The parrot, however, was in high favour, and had received a bountiful supply of nuts and other good things thrown in to him with hasty profusion. These he cracked and munched with calm deliberation, one claw in the air, under his deserted rival's nose, with solemn pauses, followed immediately by shrill whistles, that seemed to say, "I don't care a straw for anybody," accompanied with side struts backward and

forward on his perch, which had altogether a provocative air of enjoyment and self-satisfaction that was quite unendurable to the starving and neglected rival over the way. Then he began triumphantly to display his accomplishments, imitating a boatswain's whistle, with a hoarse slow cry of "All hands to grog;" then, "Oh, you *wicked* king," in Mary's gentle and reproachful voice, followed immediately by "Shut him up! shut him up, ma'am!" in Spillett's clear tones. Crack, crack, as he went on with his nuts. Then, after a silence, "God damn the king! Go to hell, ros-bif!" with such an absurd French accent, it was impossible for any human being not to laugh. This was followed by a loud noise, like some one knocking at a door, made with his beak against the cage, answered by *Entrate* in a pleasant Italian voice.

Then, after more crackings, and a long pause in deep silence, came his great feat in imitation, "Turn the hands out—shorten sail!" he shouted, in such a clear ringing tone of urgent command, and in such a loud high-pitched voice of manly energy in a moment of danger, that any one who had not heard it would never believe that such a startling volume of sound could come out of such a small organ. This was followed by shrill musical imitations of a boatswain's whistle summoning the crew on deck.

All this time the eyes of the king were inflamed with spite and hungry jealousy, and, on hearing this last triumphant performance, he shook the bars of his cage with such violence that the door burst open, and he leaped to the floor with his tail rigid in the air, and his white teeth

gleaming in the light from the window. It did not take him another second to spring on to Mr. Grego's cage, and try to seize some of his nuts, but the bird repulsed him with loud shrieks and vigorous bites. The king retreated again to the floor, and moving round under the table, he sprang lightly at the door of the cage, which he opened with the quickness and dexterity of Spillett, whom he had often watched when performing this operation, and seizing the astonished Mr. Grego by one of his claws, dragged him out, fluttering and screaming to the floor. The parrot gave him a fierce bite, and now commenced a terrible duel; for a good cock parrot, though often timid with human beings, has great courage when attacked by other birds or animals, especially a monkey, his hereditary foe. To see the surprising

vigour and vitality which even this old bird now displayed, it was not difficult to credit his race with the gigantic age so often attributed to them. At first one would have been disposed to back Mr. Grego, as he had the greater natural courage and the most direct mode of attack, and the king quickly received some severe bites on his face and arms; but the superior agility and ingenuity of the monkey, and the power which his hands gave him, soon began to tell in a fight on the ground. Leaping in the air in all directions to attack his enemy in the rear, and using his hands more than his teeth, he plucked one by one and in handfuls the feathers from the parrot's body and tail, until the unfortunate bird was a complete wreck, showing large patches of white skin, while the floor was strewn with feathers.

But Mr. Grego fought with desperation, and the air was filled with deafening shrieks and fierce jabberings. At length, after receiving a tremendous bite, which disabled one of its eyes, the monkey tore out violently at one pull the remainder of the bird's tail, which so completely discomfited him that he turned and fled, screaming and fluttering about the room. Then began a murderous pursuit, the little brute's wicked eye that was uninjured gleaming like a serpent's, the room sounding with diabolical chatterings and the bird's piercing cries, amidst a scene of wild confusion. Flower-pots were thrown to the ground, the earth and fragments of pottery scattered about, writing materials, books, and drawings, sent flying in all directions; the inkstand was upset, and its contents trickled out on to the floor; flower

vases full of water were overturned to roll smashing against the fender ; music, and a small box of tools were dashed off the top of the piano, an engraving of Mary's grandfather—to which the bird had flown for refuge—was torn down from its nail, to fall crashing with its glass against a chair; Mr. Grego's cage, where he had twice tried to find shelter, was overturned with its stand ; the fire-irons were thrown down, and some of the hot coals flung out of the fire—for even there had the deadly chase reached ; one side of the mantelpiece was swept bare, and Mary's little clock sent tingling into the fender—the monkey, springing and leaping about the room and its walls with such demoniacal fury and intensity of purpose, and such rapidity, that no eye could hardly have followed him, making wild shots at his victim in his half-

blind condition, until at length the exhausted bird, again trying to take refuge under the grate, was seized and dragged out to be executed. And when Mary and Spillett returned from the stables, where they had taken the goat for greater warmth, and came on this extraordinary scene, poor, much-prized, ever-cheerful Mr. Grego lay dead on the hearthrug, without a feather on his body, and with his neck as completely wrung as if it had been done by the hands of a charitable Christian.

But where was the murderous King of Zanzibar? He was found under a sofa in the corner, grinning and jabbering, bleeding and cracking nuts.

Mary was extremely angry for so gentle a person, and scolded the king with such righteous wrath that it argued well for her honesty in this direction should she

ever become a wife; but when he was captured and she saw his bleeding and wounded condition, and the loss of his eye, her tenderness prevailed, and she was against giving him any more punishment. Spillett was of a different opinion, as she had been very fond of Mr. Grego, but had no love for the monkey, who gave her endless trouble, stealing her thimbles and cotton, biting her on one of her ankles, and generally taxing her to keep a vigilant eye upon his proceedings; so she was determined he should have quite a new punishment, and be shut up in the dark closet under the stairs. After he had been bathed and his wounds attended to, Mary reluctantly consented, but only on glancing again at the dead and outraged Mr. Grego, tears in her eyes as she remembered when he was first brought to her years ago by Harrison.

Now this "closet" was that large irregular one under the stairs to which the reader's attention has been especially called. The king, then, was shut up in this dark place, Jenny taking care to remove the housemaids' brooms, that he should not even have the small excitement of tearing them to pieces.

Mary then covered the remains of Mr. Grego with a white handkerchief; and the two young women set to work to restore order in the room and lament over this tragic event.

At luncheon Mary could not help for once giving her grandfather some of the details of her *ménage*. The Colonel was indignant, and declared the little brute must be sent away immediately—"there was no saying what he might not do next" (no indeed!). Mary offered little immediate

opposition, trusting this small storm would blow over. When, however, she went to visit the captive in the afternoon, he was gone. Search was made everywhere, but he was not to be found. Spillett suspected Nancy of letting him out, as there was a continual mop-and-broom war between these two young women over the implements kept in the closet, as the housemaids cleaned the stairs and the little hall; but Nancy stoutly denied that she had been near the place since the morning, and the mystery remained unsolved. Mary was plunged into the deepest sadness, thinking everything she cared for in this world was to be taken from her.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COLONEL UPSETS HIS JUG OF SHAVING WATER, AND THE DAINTY MRS. SPILLETT COVERS HERSELF WITH DIRT AND COBWEBS.

"If you please, sir, the clock has stopped," said John, coming into the Colonel's room to open the shutters on the second morning after this event.

The Colonel roused himself up and opened his eyes very wide. "Stopped!" he said. "What can have happened?"

Now, to his credit be it said, the sturdy old Don Carlos had never been guilty of stopping altogether of his own free will for

many a long year. He had gone backwards and forwards, even to an hour and more, according to arrangements between himself and his ingenious patron, but stopped, never!

The Colonel overturned his jug of hot water in shaving, and dressed in such haste that he was leaving the room without his necktie, until he caught sight of himself in the glass.

"Stopped! What could have happened?"

He mounted to the tower, but could see nothing wrong. The clock went on again when he set it going, and having put it to the right time, he came down and went into the garden for his usual little turn before breakfast, which this time was backwards and forwards in sight of the tower.

"Yes, it went all right again—what could it have been?" And when Don

Carlos struck nine with his old clanking sound, he entered for morning prayers and his usual excellent breakfast of bacon and eggs—a dish, it may be mentioned, he never varied from year's end to year's end.

In the afternoon Don Carlos stopped again; and again the Colonel mounted to the tower, but still to find nothing wrong with the clock, as he set it going once more. He however observed that some one had been meddling with the tin pot which contained a supply of the new lubricator. Now, there was a narrow opening at the bottom of the tower, which led down by a few steps and a covered way on to the roof. This had no door, although the Colonel had often thought it would have been better for one; but it had always been so, and that was a sufficient reason with him for letting it alone. "Who could

have been meddling up there? Some one must have come in from the roof. "Who could have presumed to take such an unwarrantable liberty?"

He came down from the tower with an angry face, but he decided to say nothing for the present—never accusing any one without strong ground—and went out to the gardens to see and hear if any one had been on the roof, as Miss Doddingstead was quite capable of having "something done" without saying a word to him on the subject. Mary had heard that the clock had stopped, but no one regarded that as an altogether impossible event with the same faith as the Colonel.

Don Carlos went perfectly well through the night, until soon after luncheon the next day, when the Colonel, going out into the garden, found it had just stopped again.

He hurried up on to the roof, and was in time to catch sight of the king with his tail in the air vanishing round a chimney. He descended at once in great wrath to find Mary, the penultimate cause of this sacrilege. But Mary, like other mortals, had fallen back on a friend much neglected of late, and had started early to give Queen Elizabeth a much-needed gallop. The Colonel at first decided to say nothing until her return, leaving the clock as it was, that the melancholy spectacle might be presented in its full force; but meeting the rebellious face of Jenny Spillett in the hall, he could not resist the temptation of saying, "That brute of a monkey of yours is up on the roof," and then passed on without condescending to give any further information.

Spillett rushed up to her mistress's rooms

to put down some things she had in her hand, and was hastening back again through the little hall to go and find Jack the garden boy to send him on to the roof, when she heard from the closet the well-known sound of the king wanting to be released, and in great astonishment she opened the door and out leaped the monkey. Having caught him and put him into his house, she returned to the little hall; then, by a sudden inspiration, she went back to her room, lit a candle, and proceeded once more to the closet. She first looked in with the candle, then stepping over the high board at the foot of the door, she entered the closet to make a closer examination. She almost immediately saw, in the left-hand corner next to her, a small low door a little open. The opening of the door, being close up

against the partition which divided the closet from the outer hall, could not be seen unless one entered or stretched very far into the closet, as the partition took a sweep backwards, following the curve of the stairs outside. When this door was properly closed, few would have suspected it was there. When Spillett opened this little door and saw that it led into a long passage, she became breathless with excitement. She first closed the door of the closet opening from the hall, and then, stooping down, courageously entered the passage to see where it led to. It was very narrow but high, and seemed to go straight as far as the outer wall of the house. There she came to some steep narrow stairs, which turned sharp to the left, and mounting these, she found herself in another passage above, which appeared

to be on a level with the ceiling of Mary's rooms. This passage led directly back again from the way she had come in the passage below, but was of much greater length. After she had gone some distance, she came upon three little slits in the wall to the left near the ground, by which daylight entered. On stooping, she was surprised to find herself looking down on the east stairs and the drawing-room door, and she could hear Harrison's voice in the hall, and the banging of the swing-door. This sudden contact with the outer world gave her fresh courage to proceed. Near the extremity of this passage, which seemed to end in nothing, she came on another short flight of stairs which turned to the right, and led her up into another short passage. She went down this to find, quite at the end, in the wall on her left, the

framework of a door, the sill of which was about six inches from the ground. The door itself had fallen from its place, and rested slantingly against the wall at the end of the passage. Spillett then examined the opening of the doorway. The other side seemed to be blocked up by some woollen substance stretched across it, but at the bottom, above the sill, was a narrow opening through which daylight came. She could pass in her arm, but could see nothing beyond very distinctly. She then examined more closely, and found that one corner of the woollen stuff was loose, and, pushing it inwards, she could see through into a room.

She put down her candle, and tearing the opening large enough to pass through, found herself on a high narrow bed, which had been placed with its head against

the opening. The room was handsomely wainscoted, and had a fireplace. It was not very large, and had an attic roof; it was only furnished with a square table and a few chairs—one of them with a high back and wooden arms—and an oak press with a cupboard and drawers underneath. It was lighted by one window, in which a pane of glass was broken; this window had also shutters, but they were not closed. In the thick dust on the floor she saw the marks of the monkey's feet. She sprang down, and proceeded to examine further. There were three doors in the room, one of which was open, and she passed through and found a little chapel with an altar undressed, and two pictures of saints, one was on the wall, and the other had fallen to the ground. This chapel was lighted by a small window in the roof. Another

door opened into a small room which had evidently been used for purposes of washing and dressing. A looking-glass, dotted with dark spots, still hung against the side. The third door opened on a handsome staircase which was quite dark, and here Spillett's courage failed her, as she knew that she was now in the priest's hiding-place over the library, which she had often heard described, and that this staircase led from the concealed entrance in the library. The entrance she had come in by was, then, the secret escape known to tradition, but lost to the present generation; as the Colonel never would have anything moved from its place, nor curiosity satisfied by any rummaging of the house. By this means the occupant of the room could pass down into Mary's little garden, and escape into the lane by the door that has been mentioned,

and so to the coast. Spillett was greatly tempted to find her way down to the library, but her fear of the ghost of the old squire prevented her. She returned again to the closet in the little hall, and, having closed the small low door as carefully as she could, she returned to her own room. On looking at herself in the glass, she was horrified at her own picture. Her bright fair hair looked as if it had been powdered with cinders, her face was deadly pale, her deep blue eyes shone with excitement like sapphires in the sunlight, and her dainty clothes were covered with dirt and cob-webs. She changed her dress, and cleaned herself as hastily as she could, and then sat down on her bed to think of what she should do about her discovery. At length, for reasons of her own, she decided to keep the matter to herself for the present.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE KING OF ZANZIBAR SAVES HIMSELF FROM BANISHMENT BY TAKING ARSENIC.

What is it about a lady's riding-habit that makes it look so much in place in an old-fashioned garden with red brick walls covered with patches of silver-grey lichen? It must be its simplicity. Mary having seen Queen Elizabeth in her stable and taken off the bridle herself, according to her wont since the days of her first pony, had a friendly little stable chat with her devoted admirer and friend, Mr. Spillett, who would have knocked any man down who said a word

against her—this however, he was capable of, on even smaller provocation, having all the spirit and velocity of action of his dare-devil race, albeit sobered by the strait-jacket of wages and dependence. After Mary had finished her chat, she returned by the kitchen-garden to the house. It was a pleasant picture she presented—one that goes to the heart of old and young—as, refreshed by her gallop, she came lightly along by the old wall in the rays of the October evening sun, with her sweet face and natural air, holding the skirt of her habit in one hand, and in the other her whip and tan-coloured gloves, which repeated the colour of her hair that had broken somewhat out of bound in her brisk ride.

Mary, feeling the pleasure of a little walk after her ride, turned into the en-

closed garden in front of the house, when she encountered the Colonel.

"My dear," he said with an aggrieved air, "that monkey of yours has been upon the roof."

She was only too glad to hear he was anywhere, as she feared he had been secretly banished or killed to spare her feelings.

"Look!" he said, glancing up at Don Carlos with an expression of injury almost as great as Monsieur de l'Orchestre's.

Mary looked, and saw nothing that appeared to her very remarkable; the hands pointed to the hour of two, and it was certainly now nearly four. But what of that? She turned her face to hide a smile.

"Don't you see it has stopped?" said the Colonel. "That confounded little brute has been meddling with it!"

"Oh, dear grandpapa, what has he done?" she said, getting alarmed at this appalling intelligence.

"Done! He has stopped it three times, and I don't know yet if the mischief has ended there."

"Grandpapa, I am sure you will soon get it right again."

"I am not at all sure of that," he said; and, seized with this depressing idea, he suddenly started off to visit the tower, leaving Mary in the dark as to the present fate of the king. She then ran into the house to look for Spillett.

She found the monkey in his house again, and notwithstanding his double crimes of murder and malicious attempts on valuable property, he was greeted with rejoicing.

"But where did you find him, Spillett?"

"I caught him on the landing, Miss Mary. He had been up on the roof and come back again."

Mary's attention was too much taken up at this moment by something else to press the inquiry further, for on close inspection she thought the king looked dreadfully ill and changed.

"But there is something wrong with him, Spillett; he looks as if he were dying."

"Oh, he's only starved, ma'am. I have given him something to eat."

"Yes, but he hasn't touched it," said Mary; and she took the monkey out of his house, and placed him on her lap. "He is as cold as ice, Spillett, and his face looks as if he had been poisoned. He must have eaten something. We must send for Mr. Rogers," she said after a moment's reflection.

Now, Mr. Rogers was the great vet of the neighbourhood, a man with a grain of real common sense in his head, who had discovered the merits of simplicity, and who was a great personage with the farmers and hunting gentleman around—more looked up to than any doctor, unless he came down from London by an express train.

Mary wrapped up the king in one of her own little woollen shawls, and placed him on some pillows near the fire, where he lay so still, it was quite alarming. She then hastened down to find her grandfather. She met him coming down from the tower to get some tools—a look of urgency in his face.

"I told you so, Mary—the clock is injured!" he called out as soon as he saw her, and passed on. Mary followed him into the hall.

"But, grandpapa, we have caught the king, and he is dreadfully ill, and I want you to let me send for Mr. Rogers."

Was ever such a thing heard of? a rival invalid to start up at a moment like this; and the rival, "that little brute of a monkey!"

"Send for Rogers for a monkey, my dear! you must be out of your mind. Give him a good whipping and put him in the coal cellar," and he passed into his room.

Mary knew it was of little use to persist with her grandfather. But what was to be done? She then thought of what she might have remembered at first—that she had an excellent doctor close at hand in Harrison, who had for years been an ardent student of homœopathy and medical matters in general—gaining quite a small reputation in the neighbourhood by setting

old labourers on their legs with arnica and bryonia—relieving the melancholy effects of gluttony in the servants' hall with nux vomica and pulsatilla, and crowning all by one really brilliant performance in restoring to health, with rhus, a dog paralyzed in his hind-quarters, and condemned to death by the great Mr. Rogers himself. So she rushed off to her room again and sent Spillett for Harrison, who quickly arrived, only too delighted to exercise his skill on anything.

Mary and Harrison had always been great friends. He was her chief purveyor of live stock, her chief defender against invasions of her little domain, and would never have her tastes and habits questioned by any one. "If she had no other companions, she must have these," he used to say. He had even caught for her himself

those much hated and persecuted little animals, which haunt barns and old houses, that she kept in a cage in the garden—she wished to see if they could be tamed, and if they were as black as they were painted.

Harrison carefully examined the monkey. He thought at first he was only suffering from exposure and starvation; but other symptoms which appeared when they moved him, and the expression of his face, led him to think he had got hold of something poisonous. He was much bedaubed with some fatty matter, which Harrison smelt and tasted, and on Mary mentioning that he had been up in the clock-tower, Harrison exclaimed, "That's it, Miss Mary; he has been eating the Colonel's new grease, and there is arsenic in it, I'll bet anything. I remember now, he asked me if I had got any, and I posted a letter for him the same

day to Purger and Sponge at Canterbury. The Colonel's a magistrate, and can get what he likes. That's it, Miss Mary," and Harrison thought a moment. "Run down, Mrs. Spillett, and get some honey out of the apple-closet and a jug of boiling water—quick!" He produced his little case of medicines out of his pocket, and selected a small bottle. When Spillett returned, he beat up a little honey and hot water together, putting in a few drops of tincture, and forced some of it down the king's throat, who was by this time too seriously ill to offer much resistance. He then made Spillett prepare a hot bath, with mustard in it, and finally the unfortunate monkey was comfortably tucked up in a large doll's cradle, with a doll's nightcap on his head, and placed on the hearthrug. Mary, in her habit, with her

hat thrown off, and her hair, which had fallen over her face, shining like dark gold in the light of the fire, was on her knees, gently with one hand rocking him to and fro. Harrison had given directions about the medicine before he left, and on running up again before he served the dinner, he pronounced his distinguished patient to be somewhat better.

At dinner Mary and her grandfather were absorbed in thinking of their separate troubles. The clock would not go. "That little brute" had twisted some of the more delicate parts of the machinery, and the Colonel, in fumbling at it by the light of a lantern, had broken something else. There would be silence that night over the Manor-house. He was certain he could not sleep, and the servants would be all late in the morning. He was sure, also, he should

have an early visit next day from that "sly" old Rector; but he should leave orders that he was not at home. At length, when the servants were gone, the Colonel broke silence.

"That monkey must go, Mary. I can't have such a mischievous little brute on the place any longer."

"But, grandpapa, we think he is going to die. Harrison says he has been poisoned with arsenic. Was there any arsenic in that stuff you made over the fire?"

The Colonel looked guilty.

"What business has Harrison to give his opinion?" he exclaimed. But the little shot had its due effect. His delicate conscience did not like to feel that even a monkey could be poisoned by his carelessness in leaving poison about in an open place that a workman or any one going on the

roof might have got at; and he remained silent.

Mary saw her advantage. "Grandpapa," she said, coming close to his side and taking the crackers out of his hand to crack his walnuts, "I am very sorry the king has touched the clock, but if he should live and you won't send him away this time, I will have a chain made for him so that he can't get loose again."

Mary went on cracking with little consideration for her grandfather's power of digestion.

At last he said gently, "Those little brutes, my dear, have as many lives as a cat. I dare say he will recover;" and she knew the king was saved—at any rate from banishment.

She said no more, and went into the drawing-room with her aunt, who had not

uttered a word during this little colloquy, thinking the whole matter was "disgusting," in which opinion she was supported by Jenkins.

As soon as "Aunt Augusta" was well asleep, Mary stole upstairs to see how the king was getting on. He had now become excited, trying to tear off his nightcap, and jabbering fiercely as if still fighting with the parrot. Harrison was sent for again, who gave him some aconite, and had him moved further from the fire; and Jenny Spillett had the pleasure of sitting up, alternatively with her mistress, to give him his medicine,—though Mary slept little, thinking of all her misfortunes, and missing the voice of Don Carlos, to which she had been so accustomed from a child.

The next morning Harrison paid a very early visit to his patient, and pronounced

him out of immediate danger. Indeed, there could be no doubt of this, as he was sitting up in his cradle, cheerfully tearing its lining to pieces, with which hopeful little amusement Mary would not allow Spillett to interfere.

When Mary came down to prayers, she gave her grandfather such a sweet little kiss, putting her two hands on his shoulders and saying, "the king was much better," that the old man declared in his heart it was very hard to refuse anything to such a little siren; and as he mechanically read aloud on his knees Bishop Lexicon's prayer for the morning, he said inwardly to himself, "The infernal little brute was a nuisance, no doubt; but he gave her something else to think about besides that damned fellow who had got hold of her, and it was better it should remain for the present."

CHAPTER XV.

SILENCE REIGNS IN THE WOODEN TOWER, AND THE TERRIBLE SPIRIT OF THE OLD DAIRY AGAIN APPEARS.

For a whole week the injured Don Carlos refused to stir. The Rector was so unwell that he had to request the Colonel to honour him with a visit at the Rectory, to transact their usual business, as the Colonel gave a ready and liberal hand to all that went on in the parish. Twice during this time did the Colonel pay a visit to Canterbury, carrying with him a large leather bag supposed to contain legal documents, as his solicitor lived in that

venerable and peaceful old city. They must, however, have been of an unusually solid and time-defying substance, judging by the look of the bag outside; but, as we are aware the enthusiastic old Colonel heartily despised all modern clocks and clockmakers, we must not jump to the conclusion on that account that the bag contained anything of this nature. At length the Colonel sat down to luncheon with such a suppressed look of triumph and satisfaction, that Mary knew things were at last going well aloft; and as they rose from the table she heard in the distance Don Carlos striking two, though it was more than five minutes past that hour by her own watch.

But this silence in the wooden tower had not been without signification. Solomon had reversed the order of history,

and had come to visit the Queen of Sheba, and the spirit of the murdered naval captain of the "undiscovered subterranean passage" had appeared to Mrs. Walker.

The King of Zanzibar, still attended by his doctor and his two nurses, was established in Mary's bedroom on account of its greater warmth, as he had developed an ill-sounding cough, and Harrison feared congestion of the lungs; and very interesting—and comical also, to profane eyes—he looked in his little fur coat which Mary made for him from one of her own, and which he amused himself by pulling to pieces.

About the middle of this week Harrison appeared at Mary's door with a beautiful new parrot, which his friends at Deal had found for him at Hastings. Mary was

greatly pleased at this devotion, and even with the bird; but she felt he could never be the same as the mourned and long-loved Mr. Grego, and it was not without a certain pain she saw him put into the old cage, and established on the familiar perch. She endeavoured to hide her feelings from Harrison, who had now that look of kindness in his face, as he gave the history of the bird, which mostly underlies all real excellence of whatever kind. She could at first see little difference in this bird from the old one, but she soon found he had not such a beautiful tail, nor such a look of quiet dignity, though he was more solemn and did not seem so shy with strangers.

"What is he called, Harrison?" she asked.

Harrison hesitated a moment. Then he

smiled, and said, "They say he's called Solomon, Miss Mary" (he would never call her ma'am , "but you can change that, miss."

"Oh, delightful!" she said. "I shall certainly not change it, and the Queen of Sheba shall come up and pay him a visit directly."

Harrison, after looking at the king, departed, and as he went out, closing the door with a slight bang after him, Solomon spoke. "Go away, you old fool!" he screamed out in a sharp vixenish voice, and Mary laughed and thought she might get to like him after all.

"Never was there such an old ramshackle of a place as the offices at the Manor," declared Mrs. Walker, who was a dragon for cleaning and routing things out that had not been disturbed for ages.

There was a bad smell down at the bottom of the passage near the farmers' room that she was determined to get to the bottom of. Spillett declared it came out of the old dairy. Harrison had got another key that would open it, if she liked to see.

Mrs. Walker, up to this time, had more enmity to bad smells than fear of ghosts; so, after tea on the last evening of this eventful week, Spillett gave her the key and she set off, candle in hand, to survey this place in her domains from which she had been excluded. After some difficulty she turned the lock and entered. The old dairy was a large place, the same size as the entrance hall above, and part of the original building. It had a stone floor, a stone table in the middle, and wide stone slabs running round the greater part of it for the milk-pans; but against the wall,

facing the door, was a heavy wooden dresser which went nearly up to the ceiling, and was placed on four high Dutch iron castors, such as are still to be seen in old Dutch farmhouses. There was a very bad smell in the dairy no doubt, and Mrs. Walker was enchanted. Her keen nose soon traced it to something under the dresser—"dead rats, no doubt." She looked underneath as well as she could, but could see nothing, excepting that the floor was very wet. Then she seized the dresser, and tried to roll it out on its castors, but it would not move an inch. Getting impatient, she put the light down on the table, and seizing the dresser again with both hands, she gave it a savage pull, with the full force of her great weight. There was a loud snap, and the dresser rolled out so easily she nearly fell back-

wards. On looking behind it she found two things she hardly expected—a drain oozing up in the corner, and in the wall a strong low door, that was a little open. Her savage delight at unearthing her enemy, which was, "only exactly what she expected," at first turned her attention from the door; then her curiosity was roused, and she suddenly remembered Spillett's account of the subterranean passage and its terrible occupant. Nothing daunted, she pushed the door, which moved with difficulty on its hinges, and found herself in a passage which led downwards. She then boldly set out to explore.

But we must return a moment upstairs. Soon after Mrs. Walker had gone from the housekeeper's room, Harrison came to look for her; and finding Spillett there, she told

him where she was gone. Harrison was very wroth at his key having been taken without his leave, and set off at once, candle in hand, to see "what that officious old —— was meddling with down there." On arriving at the dairy he very quickly divined what had happened, and went through the inner door to look for Mrs. Walker and see for himself what she had discovered. He soon heard heavy breathing; and a few yards down the passage he found Mrs. Walker, insensible, and lying with her face on the ground. He put down his light and tried to lift her, but she was rigid, and cold as ice. He then dragged her with all his force as far as the entrance to the dairy, and ran up-stairs for assistance. In a short time he returned with the two footmen and Spillett, and between them they struggled up with

the ponderous woman, and at last got her on to the sofa in the housekeeper's room.

She was still cold and insensible, but breathing heavily, her face dark and strange. Harrison thought she had been choked with foul air, and although his own candle had not gone out, yet, as he found her with her face towards the door, she had probably been running back again when she fell. The windows were opened, and Spillett undid her stays, which were very much as if they were made of sheet-iron and sail-cloth; and that lively young person to this day never ceases to give a description of the Yorkshire stays, "where all the clothes were made that people wore!" Her own even at this time came from Paris.

Harrison would not give her anything. He said as long as she breathed she would come to; and in course of time she was

able to sit up on the sofa, with a very scared and bloodless face and breathing with difficulty. Spillett was anxious to know if she had seen anything?

"Oh yes; it was *horrible!* She didn't like to *think* of it!"

Harrison now gave her a stiff glass of brandy and water, and her tongue soon became loosened.

"It came towards her all on fire—a great tall man, with blood streaming down his face. One of his eyes was gone, and there was only a deep red hole, and the other eye was like an electric that glared at you with a murderous look; and he had a great long sword which he held out from him slanting-ways, and fire streamed from it down to the ground. And she turned as cold and as stiff as a stone gate-post, and couldn't move to save her own mortal soul;

and he came and stood stark up quite close to her, so that she could have touched him, and then she didn't know what happened after that."

Harrison was just going to laugh the matter off, and declare it was only the bad air—but a glance from Spillett stopped him, and as dinner-time was approaching, he ran off to lock up the dairy again, deciding to leave a further investigation of the passage until the next day.

Mrs. Walker still felt "so bad" that she declared she must go to bed. Having performed that operation, she lamented in comfort her never-ending misfortunes. Here she had been so comfortable; and though the "under ones" had given her the usual trouble that was to be always counted on in inferiors who knew more than their betters, yet the housekeeper's room was as

nice and polite as real ladies and gentlemen, and she hadn't much to complain of there, except that they was obstinate in their own ways. But she couldn't stay and be frighted to death in a place that was worse than living in a madhouse. Was ever such ill-luck to have to go tramping again! She was sick to dying of gentlemen's service. "Oh! if only Walker now——!" Walker was a splendid old sea-dog, much respected by every one, who commanded the brig *Charlotte Maria*, of Whitby, to the great satisfaction of her owners; but he never could command "that darned old missus of his" and had refused to live with her for years. "If only Walker now——! She was sure the character of her blood was altered." And this invincible old bully (though zealous and willing ever to do her duty to her employers) cried her-

self to sleep like a child, thinking the whole world was wrong but herself.

After breakfast the next morning, Harrison decided it would be safer to tell the Colonel at once of what had been discovered; but he was deep in his last operations on the clock, and, though much interested, he settled he would go with Harrison into the old dairy after luncheon, and they would decide if it was safe to enter the passage.

In the forenoon, Mary was in distress again about the king. He seemed to have a relapse, and be in a very prostrate and sinking condition. Harrison went up to give him lachesis—having found this serpent's poison of particular value to animals in a like state—and during his visit, he told his young mistress of the discovery that had been made the night

before. But Spillett had been beforehand with him. Mary had not known, however, of the intended exploration, and she was now anxious to join the party. Harrison thought it only right that the future heiress should be present on such an important occasion, and he promised "to stick up for her to the Colonel."

After the servants' dinner, he came to fetch his master.

"Don't you think, sir, Miss Mary ought to be present?" he said.

"Oh dear no;" said the Colonel; "quite unnecessary. And we don't know if it is safe yet."

"But it will be something for her to remember all her life, sir, and——"

At this moment the Rector arrived. Having heard Don Carlos strike, he thought it would be safe to pay a visit.

"Ah! you have come exactly at the right moment!" cried the Colonel; and he related to him "the capital discovery that had been made."

The Rector consented to join the party. He thought if the lights burnt properly there would be no danger.

Miss Mary also appeared upon the scene. "Do let me come too, grandpapa!" she said.

"Nonsense, my dear; it is not safe."

"But if it is not safe for me, grandpapa, it is not safe for you, and I shan't let you go," she said playfully.

"Well, well, well! you may come and have a peep behind, but you must not come too near, mind." And the party set off for the dairy.

Harrison, the night before, had opened the dairy window, which was a long one, high up in the wall, with an iron grating

outside level with the ground. He had also left the door into the underground passage open, thinking the bad air, if there was any, might escape in the night.

They entered the dairy with great caution; but the air seemed quite fresh and the candles burnt brightly. They then proceeded to the passage, advancing slowly at first; but the air seemed equally good there, and the Rector was of opinion that there was no danger at that end. They went down the passage, and soon entered a long cavern in the chalk rock, which was one of the chalk holes mentioned, and common enough in this part of the county. The air still seemed good, and the rheumatic Rector found there was even a draught, and hence little danger, he thought, so they advanced boldly. After they had gone some distance, they came on the right to

what looked like an old opening that had been blocked up.

The Rector considered a moment. "I know where that goes to," he said; "into Ruins Barn. There is an old opening there into a chalk hole that has been blocked up ever since I have known it, and this is where the smugglers used to bring in the kegs."

A little further on, they came to a place that had the appearance of having been used as a living-room. Regular seats were cut out in the dry chalk, and over these, other places were formed that might have been used as beds. The roof also was darker in colour, and looked as if it had at one time been blackened by smoke. Mary whispered to her grandfather, "she would not have missed it for the world;" and the old man was glad she should take so much interest in anything.

They then proceeded some way further, and came to a narrow passage that mounted upwards again. This brought them face to face with a stone wall, in which there was no apparent aperture; but on examination they found one that had been built in. The Rector at once decided they were against the wall of the church, as it was made of the same stone as that building, and so greatly at one time had smuggling been carried on in this particular parish, that even the church had been used. He recalled to the Colonel's recollection that, in their own building, there was still a "hide" in the roof. The party then decided they would return and go to the church, to see if they could find where the entrance had been on the other side. Harrison was to remain and knock against the wall. So off they set, the two old

gentlemen as gleeful as a couple of schoolboys over this most exciting adventure. Mary scampered upstairs as soon as she reached the hall, to get her hat, and, calling out to her Aunt Augusta to come at once to the church, she overtook the others as the Rector was coming back with the key. They soon heard knocking, and to their great surprise found it came from behind the large monument in the chancel to John Doddingstead and Joanna his second wife. This was a very elaborate affair, with two figures kneeling, of which one was the grandfather of the maiden on the stairs, and the other the woman who had treated her with such harshness; but she had such a pious and sweet expression, as she knelt with her hands joined together that tradition must have surely belied her, especially as she had shown such devotion

to the memory of her husband in putting up this monument at her own expense during her lifetime.

Now the Rector knew much more about the real history of the Doddingstead family than the Colonel did himself. He knew that this monument was long antecedent to the great smuggling period when they had got into trouble, like many other neighbours, at which time he did not doubt the passage had been blocked up—probably immediately after Captain Van Goyen had been killed in the lane outside. As his body was never found, he was said by tradition to be buried in this chalk hole with a chest of silver money. The whole matter had been passed over in guarded silence by succeeding generations. The Colonel would never allow that the Doddingsteads had been mixed up with the smuggling; but that

was not the opinion of the neighbourhood, which affirmed that they had been one of the worst of all in boldly defrauding the Government, and that the old dairy had been often filled with something that had a very different character from milk. But probably the Colonel knew best, "neighbourhoods" are noted liars. The knocking still came directly behind the monument, and they answered back with the Rector's walking-stick. But how could the passage have been through the monument, even though the floor of the chancel was much below the level of the outside?

They examined in every direction, but there was no sign of an opening. All three then mounted on a long form, to see better. A high piece of elaborate carving rose up behind the figures against the wall, and the Rector was energetically seized with

the idea to mount up and examine this more closely. With a great tug to help up his rheumatic limbs he caught hold of a part of the monument in front of the kneeling dame, which immediately moved out towards him. The Rector and the Colonel were then able to turn outwards the entire figure of Joanna (which moved on a pivot at her feet) and a part of the ornamental work behind attached to the pediment, which latter was cut diagonally across from the front to the back, the join concealed by ornamentation. They could now see the other side of the low entrance which had been blocked up.

"That is no smuggler's work," said the Rector. "It must have been done by the Roman Catholics when Whitepatch was turned into a hiding-place for them, and they must have used the church even after

the Reformation, as the people in the parish still believe the ghosts at the Manor hold midnight meetings here with the church all lighted up."

"Only think of my sitting and looking at that for more than half the Sundays of my life," said the Colonel, "and not knowing what was there!"

Miss Doddingstead now arrived. She had first decided she would not come, and then with an instinctive feeling that there was something "sly" going on in the house, Jenkins had persuaded her to "go and see;" and when the matter was shown and explained to her by the old Rector, who was radiant with delight, she only remarked that "Dame Joanna looked very ugly when she was turned that way."

END OF VOL. I.

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